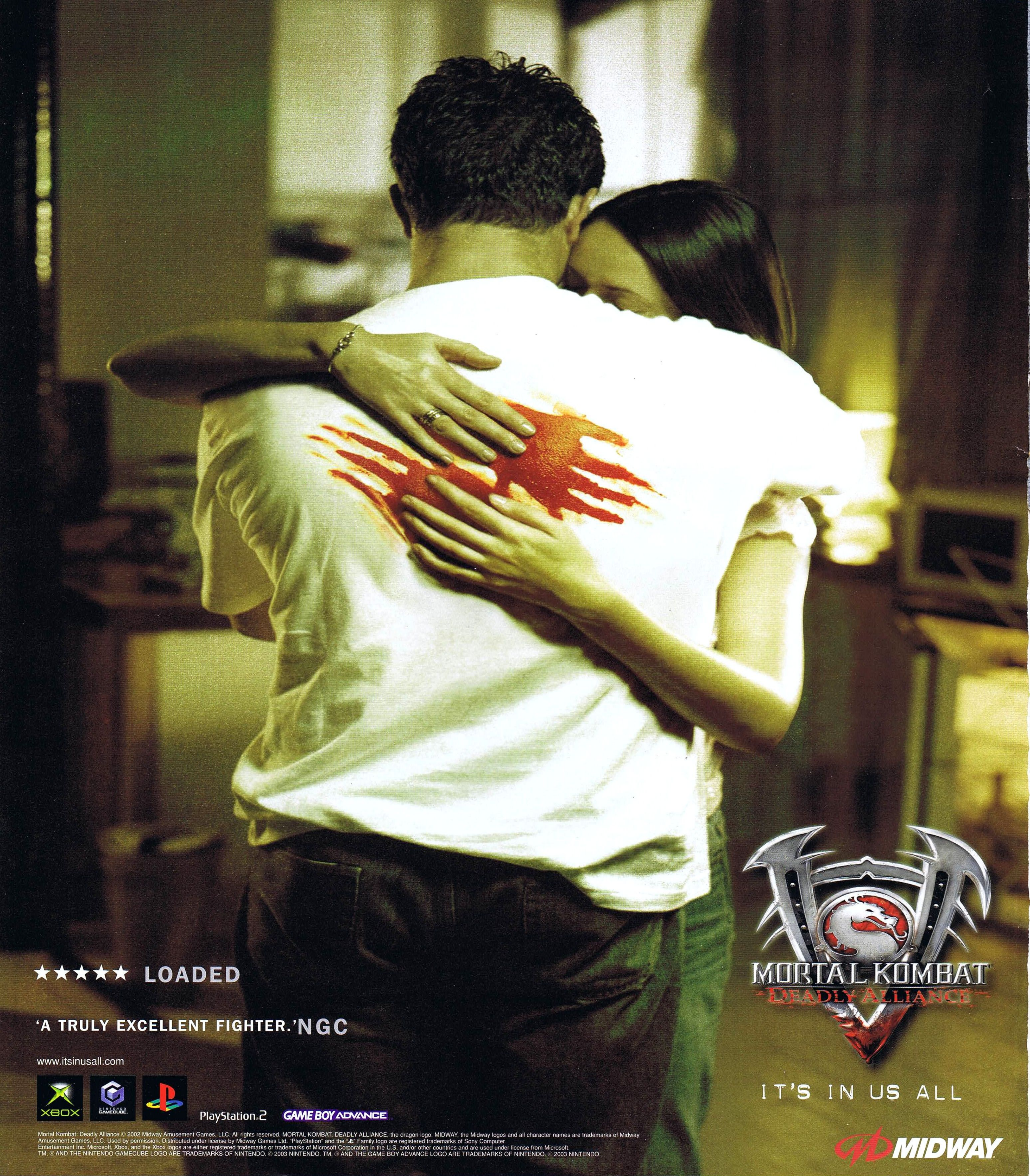

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Distributed through the UK newstrade by Seymour Distribution, 86 Newman Street, London W1P 3LD. Tel: 020 7907 6000

Overseas distribution by:
Future Publishing Ltd. Tel: 01225 442244

Printed in the UK by TPL Ltd





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MONTHS APART

We've got it lucky, really. As the UK's best-selling independent Gamecube magazine, we get to play the Japanese and US versions of games months before they hit the UK, and therefore months before you lot. Not bad, is it? But it also means that while we're huddled in front of the blazing office hearth, brandy in hand, exploring Phendrana Drifts in *Metroid Prime* or sailing the high seas in *The Wind Waker*, you're making do with playing *Pikmin* through again, or ekeing the last Blue Coin out of *Mario Sunshine*.

THE WAITING GAME

Waiting for European releases has long been a popular form of torture for PAL Nintendo fans, but the agonising amount of time between *Starfox Adventures* (Nintendo's last first-party release) and *Metroid* (not out until 21st March) has been no joke for the average punter. No wonder Xbox is gaining favour, and no wonder an increasing number of you have been turning to importing. It's a problem that really needs to be addressed, even despite the relative wealth of third-party releases. However, now that the November-March drought is almost over, you've got some real treats in store, and there's every sign that 2003 is going to be (fingers crossed) pretty packed with gaming treats. March alone brings us *Resi Zero*, *Super Monkey Ball 2*, *Metroid Prime*, and brilliantly, Gamecube's first online game, in the shape of the rather excellent *Phantasy Star Online*. Let's hope the momentum generated by these – and the May release of *The Wind Waker* – doesn't dissipate as summer encroaches.

NGC TV

Speaking of *Zelda* and *Metroid*, if you weren't excited enough by them before, have a peek at our covermounted DVD and see what all the fuss is about. If you *were* excited about them, you'll probably explode.
Enjoy the issue!

Jes Bickham Editor
ngc@futurenet.co.uk

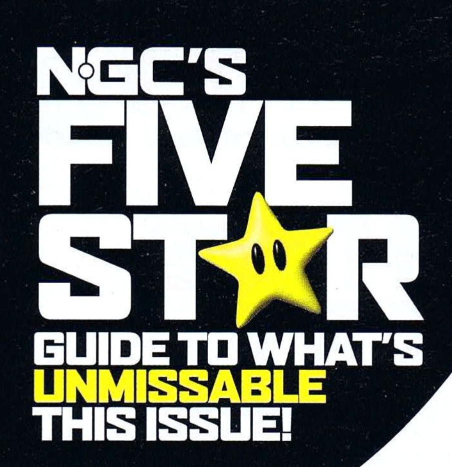
TURN TO PAGE 28...
...for our hands-on feature with *Enter The Matrix*!

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TURN OVER THE PAGE!
For five of the best things in this shambling, brain-hungry issue of **NGC**!



WHAT'S IN THE MAG?





ENTER THE MATRIX

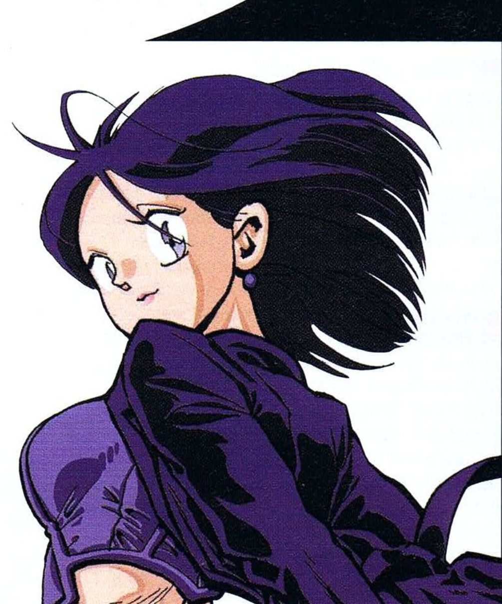
There is no spoon – but there is a game. A game of the film!





SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

Sega chuck in the kitchen sink for this monkey comeback.









ENTER THE MATRIX

PAGE 28

WE'VE PLAYED IT!

Welsh wonderboy GR Evans travelled by velocipede to London to get his filthy mitts on this movie exclusive – find all the details here, and only here. Yowsah!

MEET ENJiKi

The lovely Enjiki is **NGC***'s official mascot and, after a good few months, has finally decided to change her clothes, to get in the Matrix mood. Fetching, eh? Reminds us of the time Tim tried it on with her. He didn't leave the magazine, you know; he was beaten to within an inch of his life and dumped under a bridge, where he was tended by a family of filthy tramps. The physical damage caused amnesia, and he now wanders the sewers of Bath, lost and confused.*

3

PAGE 36



RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Brains! Brains! BRRAAIINNS! Say hello to this gorgeous zombie prequel.



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

4

PAGE 50

At last – Gamecube goes online! The future is here…



5

PAGE 106

NGC 2002 AWARDS

Your nominations counted and revealed!











ON YOUR N·GC DVD VIDEO

We're sure that, like us, you're very excited about the new *Zelda* game and *Metroid Prime*, two of the most jaw-dropping, drool-producing games we've seen. So, to make the wait for their PAL releases easier, we've decided to bring you a skipload of footage for your delectation. Enjoy!



ZELDA AND METROID!

The Gamecube's two biggest games – watch them here and be amazed!





YOUR GUIDE TO WHAT'S ON THE DISC

Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker

1. **In The Beginning**
   Link's adventure begins…
2. **Pirate Rescue**
   Your first taste of action in the Wind Waker.
3. **Dragon Island**
   Leaving home, Link fetches up here.
4. **Learning To Fly**
   Link gives the lovely Melody a helping hand.
5. **Dungeon Entrance**
   Dark, brooding and full of hot, hot lava.
6. **Birds and Lanterns**
   Midway through the dungeon.
7. **Mountaintop Fight**
   Link comes to the rescue.
8. **Burning Bridges**
   The type of puzzles you can expect in Wind Waker.
9. **Dungeon Boss**
   The most astonishing beast we've seen.
10. **Tree Island**
    Link's next port of call – and a familiar face….

Metroid Prime

1. **Space Station**
   Samus' latest exploits kick off here.
2. **Chozo Ruins**
   Samus explores the deserted city…
3. **Morph Ball**
   A useful power-up.
4. **X-Ray Battle**
   Showcasing one of Metroid's fancy visors.
5. **Phendrana Opening**
   The snowbound wonder of Phendrana unleashed.
6. **Phendrana Enemies**
   Full-on combat.
7. **Research Facility**
   Penetrating the base.

Extras

1. **Ura Zelda**
   See the remixed *Ocarina of Time* in action.
2. **Ikaruga**
   Treasure's astonishing shooter, out here in April.
3. **Animal Crossing**
   Nintendo's sublime communication game, with the Kittsy touch.

WHAT YOUR N·GC DVD VIDEO WILL PLAY ON:



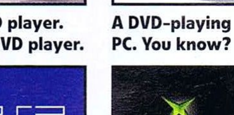
A DVD player. Any DVD player.



A DVD-playing PC. You know?



A DVD-playing Apple Mac.



A – you heard – **PlayStation 2.**



A – you're still hearing – **Xbox.**

WHAT?!
Yep, **NGC**'s DVD *will* play on rival consoles – we're big enough to admit that – but the games you're watching won't. Ever. *Zelda* on Xbox? Uhu. Uhuhu. Uhuhuhuhu.



PROBLEM WITH YOUR DISC? Get writing to the following address, quoting **ref: NIN78/03/03**: Future Publishing Disc Department, 3B Athena Avenue, Elgin Industrial Estate, Swindon, SN2 8HF.



THE WORLD OF STARCRAFT

Given the huge popularity of the sprite-based PC game, redesigning the character models in 3D was an exciting and potentially hazardous task for the game's artists. "Our fans probably know more about the Starcraft universe than we do, so they'd be very quick to tell us if we'd got something wrong," says producer John Lagrave. Consequently, each sketch was examined carefully by the team and checked for authenticity using Blizzard's vast in-house database, before being tested as a 3D model.

NGC SPECIAL INVESTIGATION

STARCRAFT GHOST

Metal Gear in the *Starcraft* universe? We visit PC developer Blizzard to check out their intriguing new console project…



How do you reinvent one of the most popular PC games of all time, turning it from a 2D strategy epic into a fast-moving 3D console adventure?

That's the question that drew us to Irvine, California, home of Blizzard Entertainment and the monstrously successful *Starcraft*. The company started out as console developer Silicon & Synapse, creating SNES hits such as *The Lost Vikings* and *Rock 'n' Roll Racing*.

These days, they're best known for their Rare-like secrecy and epic development delays, not to mention producing some of the biggest hits for the PC. Huge sales for the likes of *Diablo* and *Warcraft* mean that Blizzard's designers have the luxury of large budgets and loose deadlines. And now they're aiming to re-establish themselves in the world of console development.

"We have this incredibly detailed *Starcraft* universe that we can drop on console gamers for the first time," says Blizzard boss Bill Roper. "And we're not about to waste it on an average game. If we feel the game isn't good enough, we won't release it. We want to make a big impression on console gamers who might not know about Blizzard."

Starcraft: Ghost is the game that marks Blizzard's reintroduction to the console market. With programming

WEAPONS

Since Starcraft isn't really about collecting weapons, Nova doesn't have access to a huge arsenal during her adventure.



The standard rifle is all she needs for the majority of the game. There are a few upgrades, though. It fires bullets aplenty, along with up to 12 types of grenade, and has a powerful sniper mode. Just the thing for a tough day at the office.

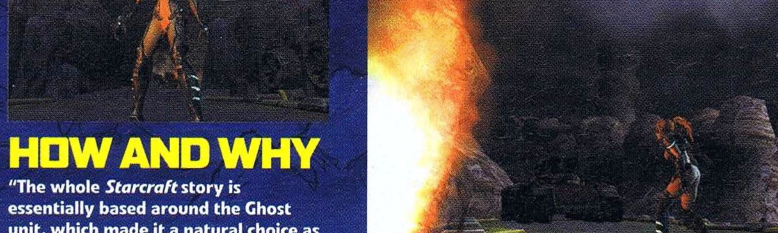


Nova can learn hand-to-hand combos, but the Psi Blade is the business. It's so powerful, it's likely to be a bonus item close to the end of the game, if it stays in there at all. There's a chance Blizzard might just drop it if it doesn't work well.

TURN OVER
…for exclusive shots of Blizzard's return to the console fold, a run-down of the foes you meet, and the weaponry you introduce them to…

COMMAND & CONQUER

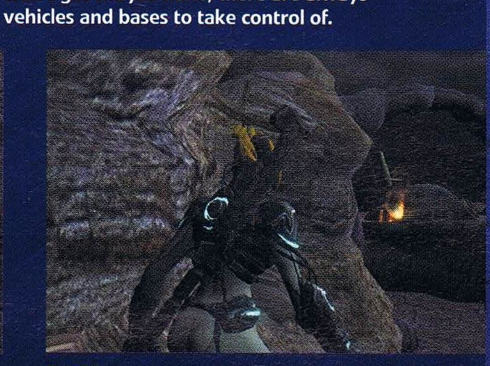
When creeping around in the shadows just won't get the job done, there are always vehicles and bases to take control of.



TANK
Terrans have all the best toys. Or at least, the easiest to steal – you wouldn't want to try nicking a Protoss motor from under its owner's nose, that's for sure. This Assault Tank is but one of many.



GOLIATH
There's more than just tanks, hoverbikes and buggies. The Goliath is a mech suit that boosts Nova's physical power. Looks like it might have taken a bit of a pasting in this particular pic. Where are its legs?



BASE
This Terran outpost might contain a powerful fixed gun or missile launcher. It could even contain the comms equipment needed to call in a nuclear strike to irradiate a Zerg-infested area.

HOW AND WHY

"The whole *Starcraft* story is essentially based around the Ghost unit, which made it a natural choice as the focus of our console game," says Blizzard's Bill Roper. "We have three very different species. Terrans are the resourceful scavenger types who can survive pretty much anywhere. Ghosts are a particular branch of the Terran forces, but maybe not necessarily under the complete control of the Terrans. A Ghost is uniquely qualified to do everything from stealth missions to playing a role in epic-scale battlefield combat. Our second species, the Zerg, are like locusts, flitting from planet to planet, consuming the inhabitants to incorporate their DNA. They don't have great technology but they overcome their prey through numerical superiority. They're attracted to the Terrans because they want to assimilate the psionic powers of the Ghosts. Finally, the Protoss are a highly advanced psychic race themselves – the natural enemy of the Zerg. When the Zerg attack the Terrans, the Protoss follow. That's the basis for the whole conflict. You'll encounter all three races during *Ghost*."

NOW YOU SEE HER...



Using the full force of her psionic powers, Nova can become virtually invisible. While cloaked like this, she can walk straight past an enemy without being spotted – walk, not run. The radar window shows concentric rings around Nova's position, indicating how much noise she's making. Run too fast and her footsteps will give the game away.





ONLINE?

Blizzard wouldn't let us in on the secrets behind the game's multiplayer options, other than to say the company takes pride in providing top-notch multiplayer options in all its games, and *Ghost* will be no different. Online options are under consideration, although Bill Roper remains sceptical about the practical aspect of console connectivity. "A lot of people have a hard time hooking up their consoles with the same cable line they use on their PC," he told us. "I have every game system you could think of and I'm not online with anything but my computer. But there is a growing core of gamers interested in going online with their consoles, and we may include something to cater for that market. It's early days. We have a lot of different ideas and a lot of it depends on how the game plays."

and design duties handled largely by specialist coding house Nihilistic, it's like *Metal Gear Solid* meets *Oni*, with a touch of *Halo* and *Perfect Dark* thrown in for good measure.

The game is all about Nova, a psionically enhanced junior member of Earth's elite Ghost team. Under the tuition of the Ghost leader, Hauler, Nova is out to prove herself as the most promising student of the Ghost academy, annihilating alien scum and rogue Earthlings alike.

The game's set in the *Starcraft* universe, picking up the story shortly after the *Brood War* add-on for the original PC title. While Nova is affiliated to the Terran forces, her only real loyalty is to Hauler, and consequently the game gives *Starcraft* fans the chance to wreak havoc and mayhem on all three species involved in the conflict – Zerg, Protoss and human.

Indoor sneaking and large-scale outdoor battles are handled with equal adeptness. Nova's stealth cloaking gives her an edge against


△ That's a Zergling hanging around just past the corner. Zerglings are weak but plentiful, and Nova kills thousands of them.


△ Either call in a nuclear strike or start praying he hasn't seen you.


△ A Hydralisk warms itself by the embers of a downed Terran ship.

X-RAY SPECS

Nova's ocular implants allow her to see through walls and pinpoint enemies that might be hiding around corners…



"IT'S LIKE METAL GEAR SOLID MEETS ONI, WITH A TOUCH OF HALO AND PERFECT DARK"

physically superior enemies when creeping through heavily guarded bases, and out on the desolate planet surface she can direct Terran ships to drop nuclear weapons to thin out the Zerg hordes.

Although it's very much a work in progress, the game has some cool touches. Nova can surprise enemies by jumping on their backs and using her close-range blade, or target them through solid walls using her enhanced vision.

Since most creatures, such as armoured Terran marines or insect-like Zerg warriors could easily rip Nova to shreds, she has an equaliser in the form of her Hyperspeed ability, which slows the rest of the world to crawling pace and leaves Nova unaffected. The way the bullet casings are ejected from her rifle in slow motion is one of the game's best visual effects. The huge enemies, epic battles and alien environments don't look too shabby either.

There's a long way to go until the game's projected November release date, and plenty of hard work to be done. But from what we've seen of it, there's a chance we could be in for something special.



FRIEND OR FOE?

When you're a psychic super-soldier, everybody wants a piece of you. Either you're a snarling attack dog for the Terran army, or you're lunch. Trust nobody.



MARINE

One of the first tasks in the game is to infiltrate a rogue Terran science facility, so these armoured nutters aren't always on your side. You can shoot out their headlights to slow them down a bit.



PROTOSS

The only species with psychic abilities exceeding Nova's. Their minds are weapons, but they don't just snap your legs from a mile away because (according to Blizzard) they're an honourable race.



MUTALISK

A nasty flying variety of Zerg. These things are actually created by a splinter group of Terrans, and want nothing more than to eat anything that crosses their paths.



ULTRALISK

When confronted by this beast, run for the hills. The game stays true to the RTS rules, so there's no way a lone Ghost can win this fight. And it isn't even the biggest type of Zerg…





THE KNOWLEDGE

- Sequel to the acclaimed 3D battler that's arguably the finest example of the beat-'em-up genre.
- Over 15 different characters who wield unique weapons in their attempt to win the ultimate prize – the Soul Edge.
- Amazing animation. Seamless movement on each and every character, with a staggering array of moves on offer.

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

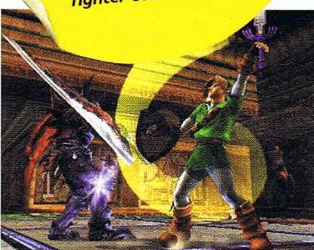
- Dead to Rights (NGC/77) 64%
Third-person action adventure with some smart touches.



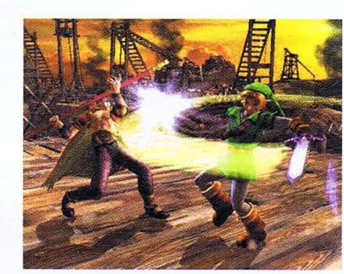
△ Months from now Link, at our command, will be dishing out the victory 'afters' to a certain blind Italian pervert.

NGC SEE LINK FIGHT!

First shots of adult Link in action against the regular cast of the Soul series, in the greatest fighter ever made.



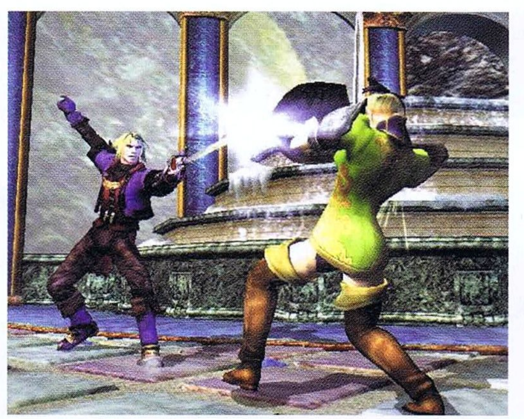
△ As ever, glowing trails follow the movements of your swinging weapon.



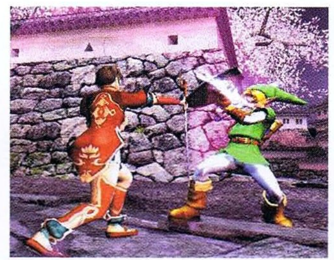
△ Kilik. The choice of the cheap, stick-whacking button mashers. Hate him.



△ 'Ave some! Link really doesn't look out of place in this.



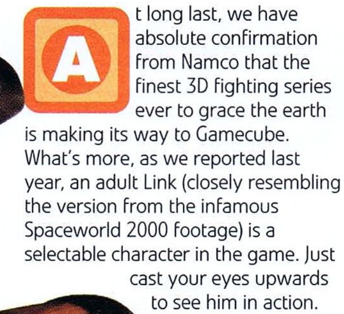
△ Raphael Sorrel and his sword 'Flambert'... he's French.



△ The guard-parry system returns.

SOUL CALIBUR 2

Adult Link is alive and kicking! We take a look at how the best beat-'em-up in the world just got even better...

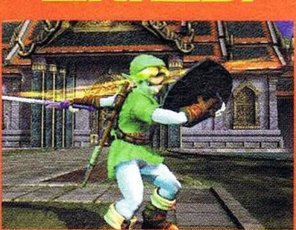


At long last, we have absolute confirmation from Namco that the finest 3D fighting series ever to grace the earth is making its way to Gamecube. What's more, as we reported last year, an adult Link (closely resembling the version from the infamous Spaceworld 2000 footage) is a selectable character in the game. Just cast your eyes upwards to see him in action. (as if you haven't already, though!) Great news all round, then – especially when you consider the quality of all the other fighters available for the Gamecube.

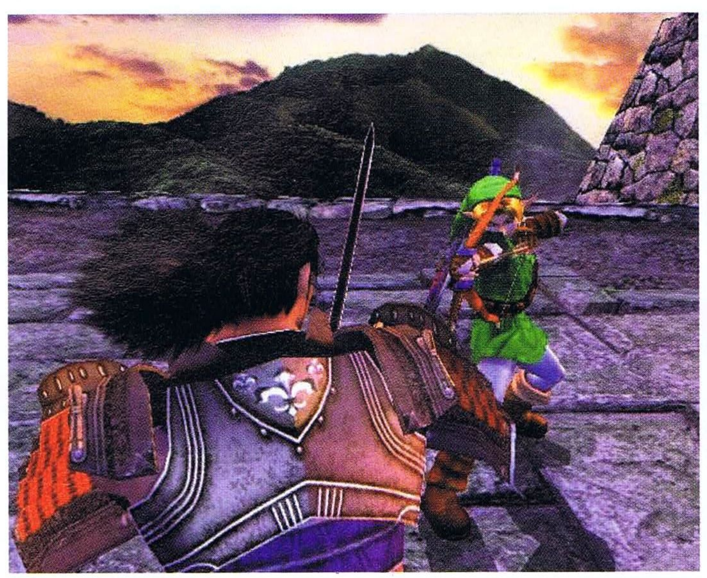
NEW AND IMPROVED

The best news of all, though, is that Namco have managed to top their previous effort – not bad going considering *SC*'s still king of the ring after all these years. Packaged alongside the standard Arcade mode (battle your way to – and through – the boss encounter to finish), Namco have included all the best features from the console versions. Top of the list has to be the RPG Weapon Master mode, which allows you to take your

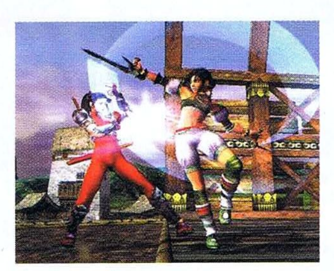
LINKED!



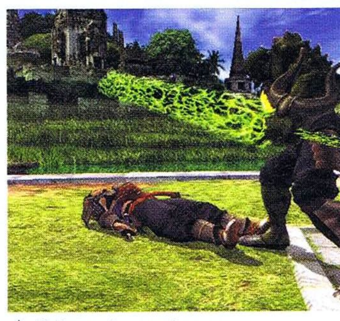
Namco have included most of Link's infamous moves. His hookshot, bow, bombs and infamous spin-attack have all been captured perfectly. In fact, it's all been done so well that he doesn't look out of place at all.


Link attempts the risky 'shoot-the-cheese-from-between-my-teeth' trick. Tangy.


Necrid. Look at the state of him.


Talim and Taki – the more acrobatic of the game's fighters.


Mitsurugi admires Necrid's boots and avoids smelling his thrusting green steel.


If they take out the post-victory whuppings, we'll cry.


Namco have really done a wonderful job on all the character models (we didn't expect anything less), and the animation on each is as fluid as ever.


Mitsurugi dishes it out just the way Ivy likes it... this game really is a looker – just check out those, erm, cherry blossoms.

chosen character over a lengthy quest, battling foes under strict conditions, and fulfilling innovative challenges which supply you with the knowledge (and skills) to master the game's finer points and strategies.

> **NEW TO THE SERIES IS THE ABILITY TO STRIKE WITHOUT HAVING TO STOP RUNNING**

More importantly, in a welcome return from the PSone's *Soul Blade*, progression will be rewarded with extra weapons. Once you've earned them they can be used in the game's other modes too. Nice touch.

Gameplay-wise, *Soul Calibur 2*'s mechanics remain largely the same. The superbly fluid eight-way run system is back with a vengeance, which means attacks can be initiated from all angles with the greatest of ease. New to the series, however, is the introduction of the ability to actually strike without having to stop running. The 'guard impact' system that allows you not only to block, but to parry and deflect a strike away in any direction, has also been included as well as refined to give you more defensive options.

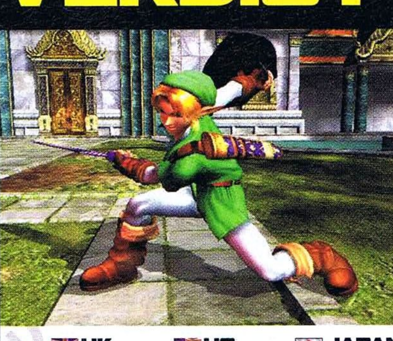
The character roster in the arcade version comprises 16 fighters available from the outset – we're not entirely sure about the hidden characters, though, as the console version is bound to be slightly different in terms of extras.

The only major problem is the long wait before release (it won't be out here before autumn) and the fact that the GC's pad is still rather lacking when it comes to fighting games.

NGC VERDICT

By jove! Link! Look at the little fella go! We admit we were somewhat sceptical when we caught wind of his possible inclusion in the game, but now that we've seen the elf-boy in action, we're positively amazed. Okay, so the arcade-playing hardcore are somewhat disgusted by these console-specific characters (apparently they've 'soiled the sanctity of the series') but we reckon he fits in a treat. Lord only knows if Namco will give him a *Calibur*-esque back story, though. We'll just have to wait and see.

As for the rest of the game, it's as stunning to look at as we'd hoped. Namco have really gone overboard on the visual effects, and the seamless animation between moves and movements has to be seen to be appreciated. Amazing.



UK	US	JAPAN
TBA	2003	13TH DEC

WHAT WE WANT TO SEE INCLUDED

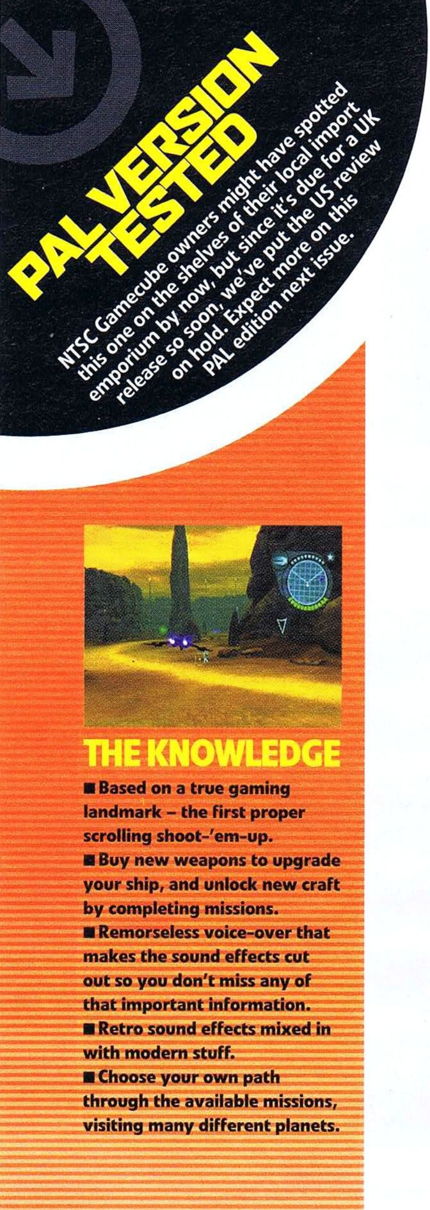
- A return of all those tasty secrets and unlockables, like weapons exhibitions and galleries that were so much fun uncovering in the Dreamcast version.
- Dropping the disappointing clone characters. There's nothing worse than unlocking a character only to find it plays the same way as another.
- Still no sign of Sung Mina...

ANTICIPATION RATING






GETTING COCKY? Namco are so confident about their new fighter that they're projecting sales of two million units over three consoles shortly after the game's release. We reckon they'll manage it...



PAL VERSION TESTED

NTSC Gamecube owners might have spotted this one on the shelves of their local import emporium by now, but since it's due for a UK release so soon, we've put the US review on hold. Expect more on this PAL edition next issue.

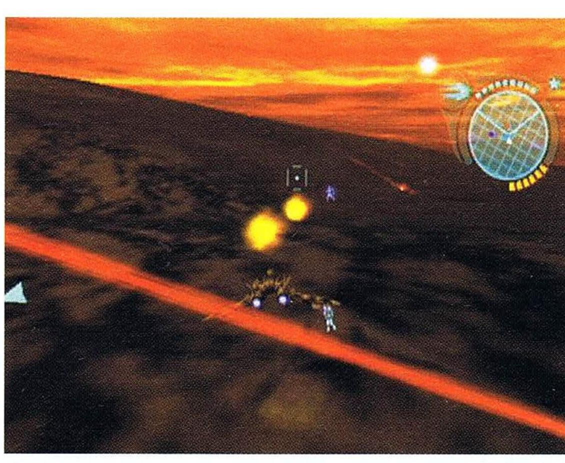
THE KNOWLEDGE

- Based on a true gaming landmark – the first proper scrolling shoot-'em-up.
- Buy new weapons to upgrade your ship, and unlock new craft by completing missions.
- Remorseless voice-over that makes the sound effects cut out so you don't miss any of that important information.
- Retro sound effects mixed in with modern stuff.
- Choose your own path through the available missions, visiting many different planets.

THIS LOT ALSO DID…

- **Legion: Legend of Excalibur (PS2)**
  Arthurian hack-'n'-slash adventure that's "soon to be translated into French." Woo!

NGC INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING HANDS-ON PLAYTEST



△ The little men dangle off your wings. If you drop them they wave at you as they fall. It looks really, really silly, to put it bluntly.



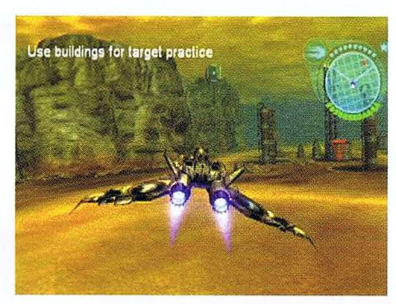
△ Now imagine this moving at high speed, with all the 'eeeeowwwwaaaa' analogue sound effects from the arcade machine. It should be the best thing ever, but… tune in next month.



△ Remember this from the original arcade game? Of course you don't, because this yellowy-brown wasteland is spanking new.



△ This ship is slower and more heavily armoured than the standard one.



△ Use buildings for target practice? Let's hope the residents are all tucked up in bed.

DEFENDER

The most punishing retro game of them all visits the 21st century.

If you can remember playing the original *Defender* when it first came out in the arcades, you probably have a mortgage, a few grey hairs, and kids who'll laugh at you for being so obsessed with retro gaming.

But anyway, those in the know will happily witter on about it for hours, explaining exactly how Eugene Jarvis created arguably the greatest shoot-'em-up ever seen, and why he never produced anything else even close to *Defender*'s quality.

This 3D update retains many of the classic bits and pieces from the ground-breaking 1980 hit, such as the little humanoids that wander around on the planet's surface, and the hungry aliens that try to turn them into mutation fodder.

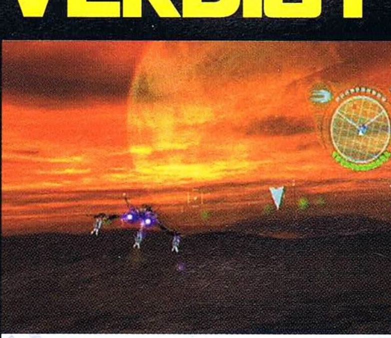
It also adds a strategy element, in the form of bonus weapons that get created every time you rescue three human colonists. These can be taken to far-off points on the battlefield and left to hold off the alien menace until you've taken care of more pressing business elsewhere.

The disc includes a brief video feature with comments from the man Jarvis himself, although it's all over long before he gets around to apologising for *Cruis'n USA*.

The game is already out in the States, and we'll review the PAL conversion next month.



Apart from the sound effects and the scenario, it doesn't have a great deal to do with the game that inspired it. But then the gameplay from 1980 wouldn't go down too well in 2003, and this plays a lot like the free-roaming bits from *Lylat Wars* on the N64, with the addition of a bit of fetch-and-carry. The aliens are nothing like as menacing as they were back in the day, since you can take many shots before exploding. We're sceptical, but healthily so.



UK	US	JAPAN
MARCH	OUT NOW	TBA



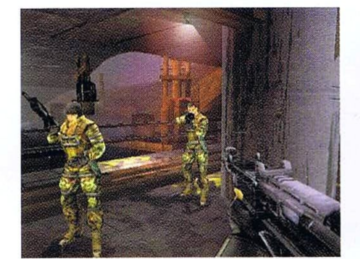




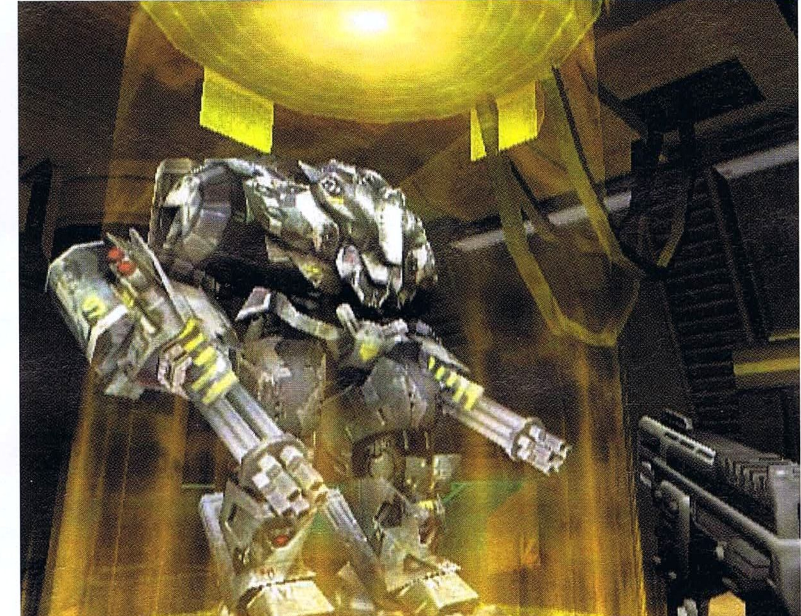


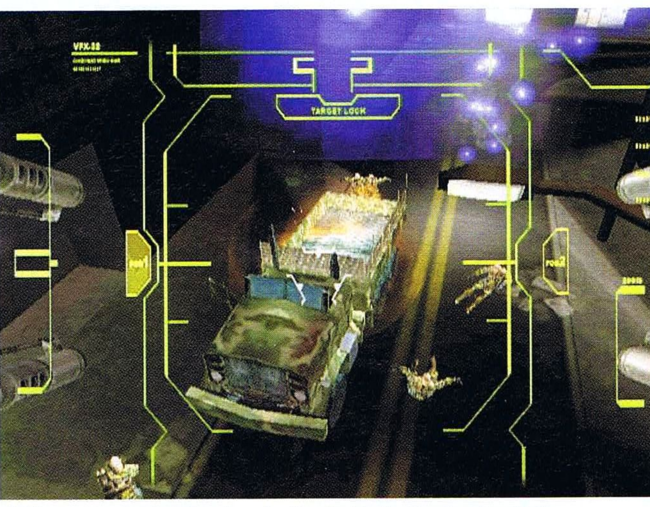





△ The game's humour is influenced by films such as Starship Troopers.


△ Aha – vehicles! You can really lay on the destruction in one of these.

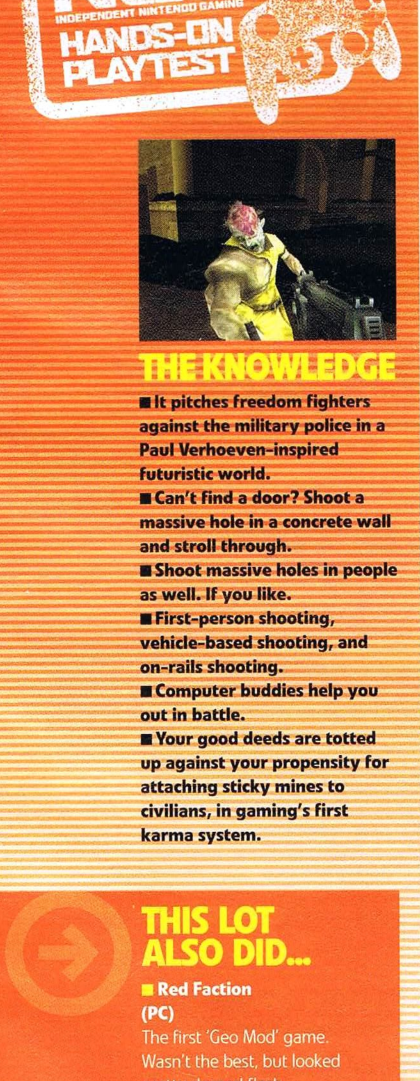

△ The Paul Verhoeven influence is everywhere, from the black humour of the infomercials to the design of things such as this gigantic metal monster. Go on, trooper – rip it a new one.


△ The conversion is being done by Cranky Pants, the development studio responsible for *Summoner*. See last month's issue for a preview.


△ Let rip with the miniguns and watch as bits of buildings fly everywhere.


△ Looks like a zombie lady with Hitler's face and Charlie Chaplin's haircut. Spooky.


△ This dual-function grenade gun is just the thing for dealing with the kind of enemies mere bullets can't damage. Very meaty.



THE KNOWLEDGE

- It pitches freedom fighters against the military police in a Paul Verhoeven-inspired futuristic world.
- Can't find a door? Shoot a massive hole in a concrete wall and stroll through.
- Shoot massive holes in people as well. If you like.
- First-person shooting, vehicle-based shooting, and on-rails shooting.
- Computer buddies help you out in battle.
- Your good deeds are totted up against your propensity for attaching sticky mines to civilians, in gaming's first karma system.

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **Red Faction (PC)**
  The first 'Geo Mod' game. Wasn't the best, but looked pretty darned flash.

RED FACTION II

Break on through to the other side… and kill some newsreaders.


The big selling point for the original *Red Faction* was the ability to shoot realistic holes in solid objects. As a graphical effect, it was great, but because it was limited to certain illogical areas, its gameplay value was zero.

This enhanced sequel takes big steps towards improving things. Okay, you can still only destroy specific objects, while everything else remains unscathed, but the rest of the game is loads more fun.

It's all about fighting the powers that be, using massive guns and stolen military vehicles. While most of the game is played using a first-person perspective, some scenes involve controllable vehicles or place you in the gunner's seat of an armoured helicopter. One memorable moment early on sees you strafing four sides of an office block, as glass shatters, steel is torn apart, and unfortunate men in suits get chased down by guided missiles.

The game's humour is obviously influenced by movies such as Starship Troopers and Robocop. Characters come out with cheesy one-liners, and there are propaganda-filled news reports from time to time. You even get to meet one of the newscasters during an assault on a TV studio, and if you're feeling less than charitable, you can introduce him to your arsenal of high-powered weapons. Sweet.



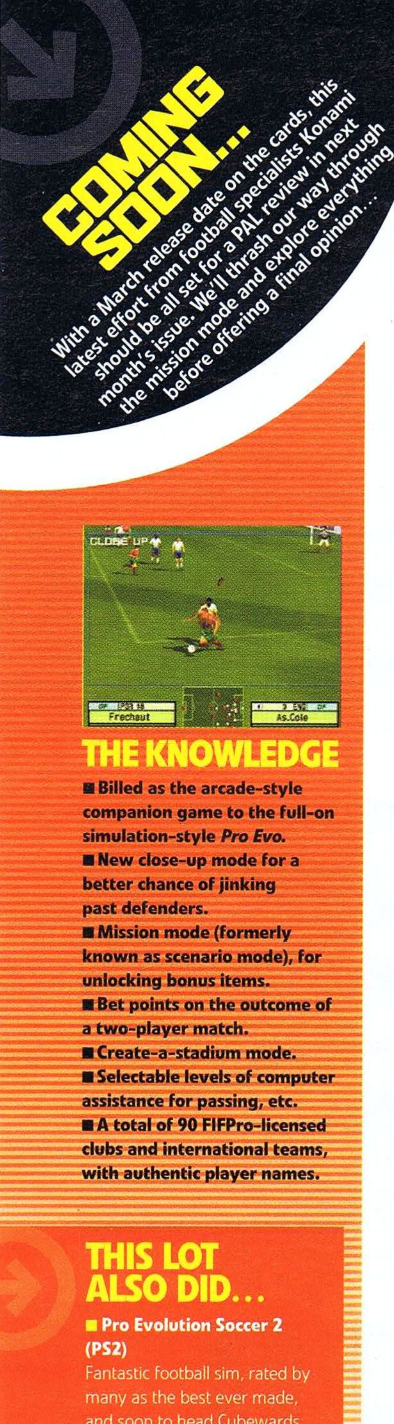
NGC VERDICT

The PS2 version, released late last year, was an enjoyable piece of fairly brainless shooting action, and there won't be any significant gameplay changes for the GC conversion. Various technical upgrades are to be included, such as improved texture resolution, greater colour depth, and better lighting effects. Some brand new animations have also been recorded, which might be a bonus for those who've already played it on PS2.

UK	US	JAPAN
APRIL	MARCH	TBA

ANTICIPATION RATING

1 2 3 **4** 5



COMING SOON...

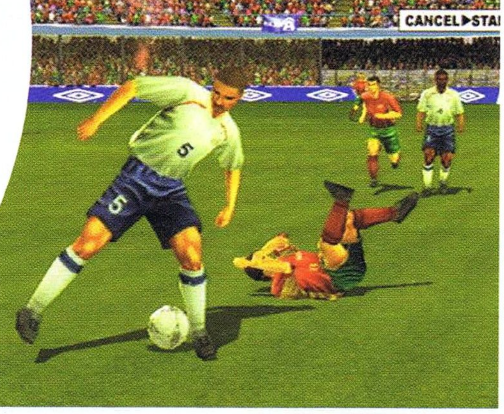
With a March release date on the cards, this latest effort from football specialists Konami should be all set for a PAL review in next month's issue. We'll thrash our way through the mission mode and explore everything before offering a final opinion...

THE KNOWLEDGE

- Billed as the arcade-style companion game to the full-on simulation-style *Pro Evo.*
- New close-up mode for a better chance of jinking past defenders.
- Mission mode (formerly known as scenario mode), for unlocking bonus items.
- Bet points on the outcome of a two-player match.
- Create-a-stadium mode.
- Selectable levels of computer assistance for passing, etc.
- A total of 90 FIFPro-licensed clubs and international teams, with authentic player names.

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

- **Pro Evolution Soccer 2 (PS2)**
Fantastic football sim, rated by many as the best ever made, and soon to head Cubewards.



△ A well-placed elbow puts paid to a Portuguese attack.



△ The close-up zoom effect in action. Irritating, you say?



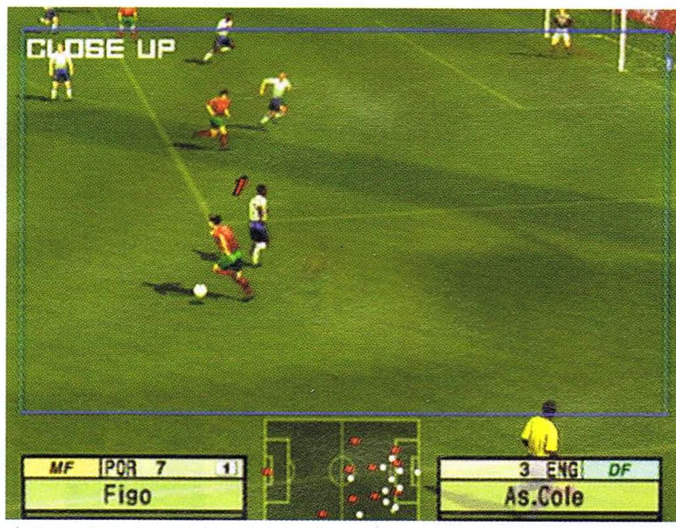
△ David looks worried as Posh is dragged onto the pitch and force-fed in front of a howling crowd.



△ The C-stick makes the dead-ball arrow curl. It's as easy as can be.



△ Press R when the camera zooms in to activate a defender-dazzling move.



△ Ha ha, fooled you. Ashley Cole is left looking a tad foolish as Luis Figo elects to run in completely the wrong direction, back towards his own half. A cunning ploy.



ISS 3

Football crazy – you've never played one like this before.

More *Superstar Soccer*? Actually, this one isn't just the usual update of player names and menu screens. It's a complete reworking of the *ISS* brand, in order to distance it from the more serious *Pro Evolution* titles.

The scenario option has turned into something called Mission mode, in which you can win points to buy a huge array of bonus items – extra moves, new kit, and even parts for the create-a-stadium mode.

On the pitch, the most obvious addition is the all-new close-up mode. When one of your players goes up against an opposing defender – when charging down the wing, for example – pressing the left trigger makes the camera zoom in, complete with a special blur effect.

Pressing R makes him do a trick such as a step-over or nutmeg, and a border around the zoomed-in area turns blue or red to indicate whether the move was successful. The view then returns to normal, leaving the defender trailing in your wake or the attacker flat on his face.

Take into account the frequent assistance from the computer, and it's obvious that *ISS* has changed almost beyond recognition. With *FIFA* moving towards the *Pro Evo* sim territory, Konami must have spotted a niche for a football game that doesn't require intensive training to play properly…

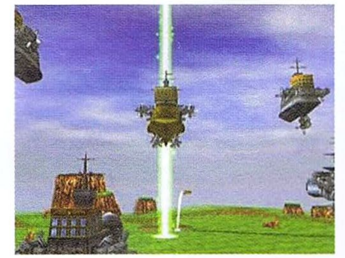
NGC VERDICT

The preview edition we've been playing is rough around the edges, so it would be unfair to judge it too early. However, the zoom feature isn't going to change in the final version, and to be perfectly honest it seems like a gimmick that interrupts the flow of the game. Maybe it would be better if you could only do it a few times during a match rather than every time a defender comes near one of the forwards. At least the array of extras looks very encouraging.



UK MARCH | US TBA | JAPAN TBA

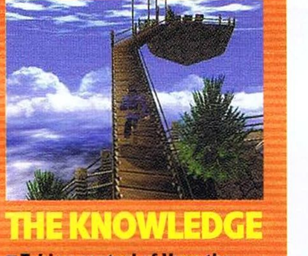
ANTICIPATION RATING: 3


△ The evil Valuan Empire close in on another of the powerful moonstones.


△ Flying your ship around this stunning, detailed world is a real treat.


△ The character models have all been slightly updated to give the game a more polished feel.


△ All the locations are in full 3D. None of your pre-rendered rubbish here.

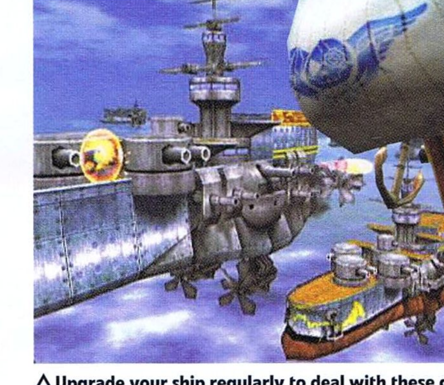
THE KNOWLEDGE

- Taking control of Vyse the 'Blue Rogue' you must journey from your childhood home across the skies in your air-ship in order to recover the all-powerful Moonstones from the vile clutches of the evil Valuan Empire who – you guessed it – plan to use them to conquer the world.
- Massive game world, where players can roam the skies at will, doing battle with rival pirates, and recruiting hardy shipmates as you go.
- Vastly improved battle engine and reduced battle encounters enhance this new version of the DC classic. New characters and quests help bolster the game hours and, importantly, the already impressive storyline.

THIS LOT ALSO DID...

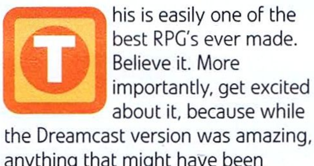
- **Skies of Arcadia Dreamcast**
See above. This highly acclaimed RPG was the finest on Sega's defunct system.

△ Battles were the only major flaw in the DC version.


△ Upgrade your ship regularly to deal with these guys.

SKIES OF ARCADIA LEGENDS

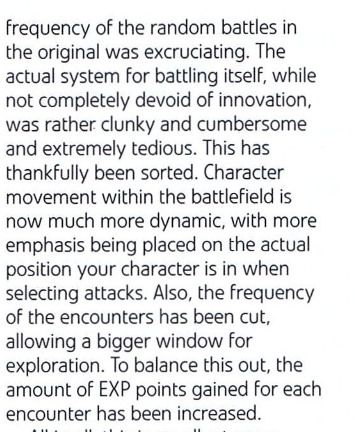
RPG Ahoy! Dreamcast's brilliant adventure gets itself ship-shape…



This is easily one of the best RPG's ever made. Believe it. More importantly, get excited about it, because while the Dreamcast version was amazing, anything that might have been wrong with it has been ruthlessly eliminated for the Gamecube.

Yup, this isn't just a lazy port. Sega have overhauled the whole thing, tweaked it, built some bits from the ground up and generally taken note of any criticisms gamers may have had. New to the game are a host of new characters and a new member to add to your main party. There are also more rival pirate ships patrolling the skies, many of which have a bounty on their heads should you wish to increase your cash-load.

Perhaps the biggest and most important of all the changes, however, is to the battle system. the frequency of the random battles in the original was excruciating. The actual system for battling itself, while not completely devoid of innovation, was rather clunky and cumbersome and extremely tedious. This has thankfully been sorted. Character movement within the battlefield is now much more dynamic, with more emphasis being placed on the actual position your character is in when selecting attacks. Also, the frequency of the encounters has been cut, allowing a bigger window for exploration. To balance this out, the amount of EXP points gained for each encounter has been increased.



All in all, this is excellent news. *Skies of Arcadia* has one of the best stories of recent RPGs. The game world is HUGE and remarkably detailed, and its blend of sky-sailing and on-foot exploration is utterly unmissable. We can't wait.

NGC VERDICT



Brilliant! Vyse Aika and Fina's fantastical pirate adventure is a brilliant slice of gaming, with some of the most stunning and imaginative locations you'll ever expect to see – we really can't praise it enough.

It's fantastic to hear they've ironed out the original's wrinkles, too – something that Sega must be highly commended for. If only other developers would take a leaf out of their book…

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

ANTICIPATION RATING: 1 2 3 4 **5**



CASTLEVANIA ARIA OF SORROW



Solar, so good for Dracula and the gang…

Nobody could ever forget the solar eclipse of 1999. The **NGC** team stood in a chilly park in Bath town centre, watching in awe as the cloudy sky darkened slightly, then went back to normal.

It was even more rubbish than the non-appearance of the millennium bug, but in the world of Castlevania, that eclipse banished Dracula's castle to some kind of nether dimension.

Skip forward 30 years, as some foolish thrill-seekers visit Transylvania to witness the first eclipse of the 21st century. We could have warned them not to waste their money, but they do it anyway, and are promptly whisked away to wherever Dracula and his undead mates are hanging out.

Can they escape? Will they find the secret lever to banish Drac on a more permanent basis? All will be revealed on GBA this summer.



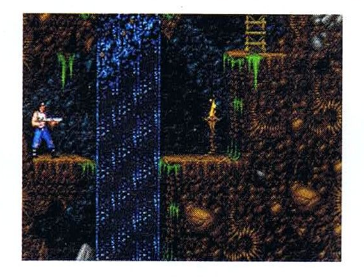
ROCK 'N' ROLL RACING

Another fondly remembered SNES game, *Rock 'n' Roll Racing* is one of those pedal-to-the-metal all-out speed-fests we don't see too often these days. The isometric perspective is another thing that we thought had been banished to the bowels of gaming history, as it always made controlling the action a bit trickier than it should have been, But this is a decent racing game. Yup.





BLACKTHORNE



Once voted Best Guy-With-A-Gun Game (in America, naturally), this SNES remake has some nice touches. If your dude gets bothered from behind, he can point his shotgun over his shoulder and unleash a couple of rounds of hot lead without even looking. Now those are the kind of 'mad skillz' we'd like to see Mario using in his next outing…

THE LOST VIKINGS

Puzzle fun with Scandinavians…



Ahh, Vikings. Once the most fearsome bunch of thugs on the planet, they left a legacy of novelty hat and moustache sets, generally worn by Danish football fans and hopeless drunks at stag parties.

And this, a conversion of (wait for it) a SNES game of yesteryear. Three Vikings combine their unique abilities to solve puzzles and escape fiendish 2D mazes, in one of the titles that set developer Blizzard on the road to PC stardom and, ultimately, *Starcraft: Ghost* (flip back to page 8 for a very close look at that one).

The main difference in this version is the lack of multiplayer support. According to the chaps at Blizzard, it was dropped because it simply wasn't any fun on the GBA. Fair enough.

Anyway, now it's three Vikings for just one greedy player, and a very nicely designed set of intricate puzzle levels. Out in a couple of months.



△ **This all looks a bit too *Sonic the Hedgehog* for our 'viking' (ho ho)…**



△ **Three Vikings working in perfect harmony. The ginger one is the Begbie of the team, hence the distance kept by the others.**

JET SET RADIO

Spray cans at the ready, urban warrior.



Argue all you like over which game was the first to use cel-shading. Was it *JSR*? Was it that weedy *Wacky Races* thing? The general consensus here is that *Gex 64* pioneered the whole zero-textures look, and we were so sure it was going to be the next big thing, we even put it on our cover.

But we digress. *JSR* plainly has a lot to answer for, and now its cartoon beauty is set to grace the GBA. The conversion is being done by Vicarious Visions, the same developer as the impressive *Tony Hawk* titles, which is why these screens look so much tastier than we have any right to expect on a handheld.

Five cities, ten characters, and a whole bunch of multiplayer stuff. You can race your friends (up to four of them), have graffiti contests, go two-on-two, and more. Sounds great! It's out around springtime.



NGC SUPER SONIC

Sonic Adventure 2 isn't the only Sonic game coming – Sonic Mega Collection should be out over by April. We reviewed it on import in issue 76.

SONIC ADVENTURE DX

The blue hedgehog returns, time-warp style, with his first next-generation adventure.

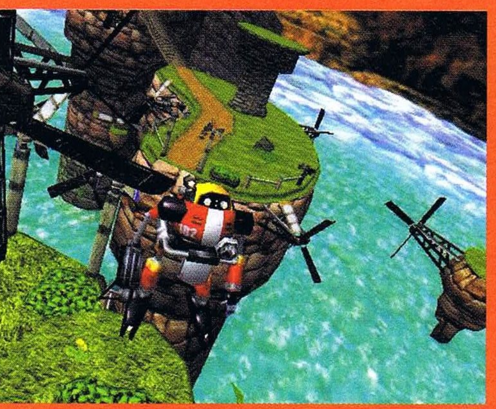


Love it or hate it, *Sonic Adventure 2: Battle* was remarkable for one thing – Sega's mascot was starring on a Nintendo console for the first time. Who'd have thought it, eh?

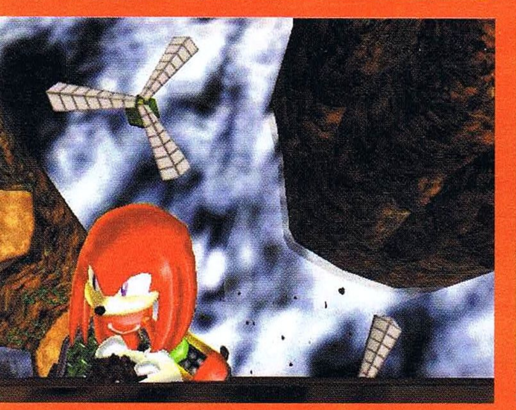
And now he's back for a repeat performance, with his first Dreamcast adventure, arguably a more enjoyable affair than his second 3D outing.

There's still the same almost-on-rails hyper-fast running levels, but it's all based around a city hub, and there's some enjoyable exploration going on too in the aptly-named 'adventure fields'. Despite our reservations about *SA2*, we're looking forward to this one – the music's a lot better than in the sequel, too. (Even though it's also got voice acting from teeth-itching talent-void child-Vader Jake Lloyd, which is frankly dreadful).

So a step backwards, then, but one that should help to ease the wait until *Sonic Adventure 3* arrives, at least.



















XGRA

Extreme G is back! With a new, slightly impenetrable name…



While never reaching the future-racing highs delivered by the sublime *F-Zero X* on the N64, the nonetheless enjoyable *Extreme G* series hit a high point with the hugely underrated *XG3* last year. And now developers Acclaim Cheltenham has come up with a third sequel – the oddly-named *XGRA* (the RA stands for racing association), which is just dandy with us.

The big news is that the game has been slowed down, to make a more tactical experience. Alongside with that, the new tracks are wider – to promote more battle-based racing – and controls have been considerably tweaked as a 'power slide' is now included. Previous *Extreme G* games didn't really require you to do much other than zip left or right a little at cheek-flapping speeds, so these new elements should make for a fundamentally different game – although we've no doubt the new 'slower' speeds will still be astonishingly quick.

It also has to be said that, graphically, Acclaim Cheltenham have outdone themselves this time around – just look at the these shots to see the level of detail they've managed to achieve. If they can pump this level of detail out of the humble Gamecube and still maintain a silky-smooth frame-rate, *XGRA* should be a treat indeed. We'll have more soon.

ULTRA RELEASE LIST

The latest on every Cube game in development – updated monthly!

Welcome to our new Ultra Release List. It's been created to help you see exactly what's coming out when on the Gamecube. As you can see, there are loads of releases coming your way over the next few months, but plenty of games don't yet have PAL release dates. We'll be updating this page every month, though, so keep your eyes peeled for the latest info.



MARCH

Batman Dark Tomorrow	Kemco
City Racer	Ubi Soft
Disney Sports Basketball	Konami
Downtown Run	Ubi Soft
Dr Muto	Midway
ET Search for Dragora	Ubi Soft
Evolution Worlds	Ubi Soft
Freeky Flyers	Midway
Hunter: The Reckoning	Virgin
ISS 3	Konami
LOTR: The Two Towers	EA
METROID PRIME	Nintendo
Monsters Inc: Scream Arena	THQ
Phantasy Star Online	Infogrames
Racing Simulation 3	Ubi Soft
Rayman 3	Ubi Soft
RESIDENT EVIL ZERO	Capcom
RTX Red Rock	Activision
Super Bust-a-Move 2	Ubi Soft
SUPER MONKEY BALL 2	Infogrames
Tom and Jerry	Ubi Soft
Tom Clancy's Ghost Recon	Ubi Soft
X-Men: Wolverine's Revenge,	Activision
Zapper	Infogrames

APRIL

Baldur's Gate: Dark Alliance	Virgin
Big Mutha Truckers	Empire
Blood Rayne	Vivendi
Conflict Desert Storm	SCI
Def Jam Vendetta	EA
Drome Racers	Lego/EA
Galleon	Virgin
HITMAN 2	Eidos
IKARUGA	Infogrames
Island Xtreme Stunt	Lego/EA
Lotus Challenge	Virgin
Mace Griffin: Bounty Hunter	Vivendi
Red Faction II	THQ
Sonic Mega Collection	Infogrames
WWE Crush Hour	THQ

MAY

Black and Bruised	Vivendi
Burnout 2	Acclaim
Dragon's Lair 3D	Infogrames
Enter the Matrix	Infogrames
Futurama	SCi
Gladius	LucasArts
The Legend of Zelda: The Wind Waker	Nintendo
Lost Kingdoms 2	Activision
NBA Street Vol 2	EA
Resident Evil 2	Capcom
Skies of Arcadia	Infogrames
Vexx	Acclaim

JUNE AND BEYOND

Gallidor: Defenders of the Outer Dimension	Lego/EA
Resident Evil 3	Capcom
Soul Calibur 2	Nintendo
V-Rally 3	Infogrames
Wario World	Nintendo
WWE Wrestlemania X9	THQ

TBA 2003

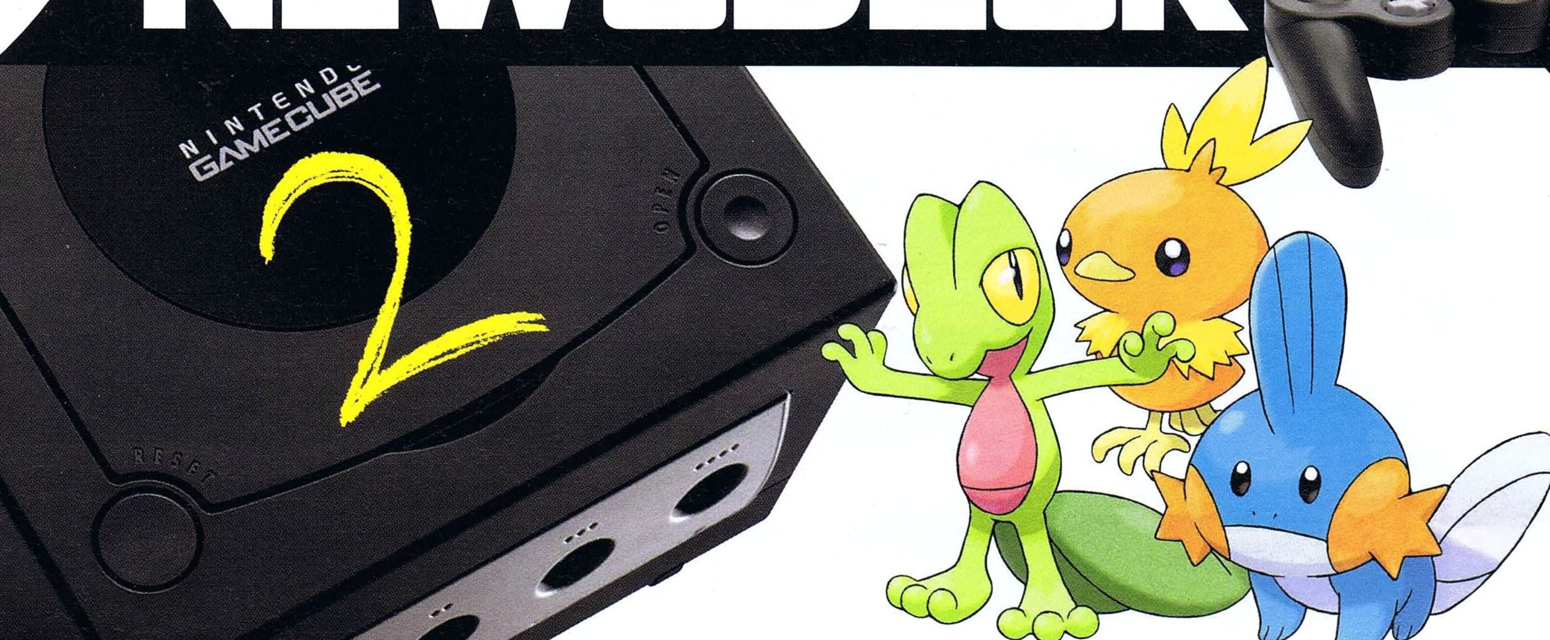
1080°: Avalanche	Nintendo
Animal Crossing	Nintendo
Broken Sword: The Sleeping Dragon	Revolution
Colin McRae Rally 3	Codemasters
Dead Phoenix	Capcom
Driver 3	Infogrames
F-Zero	Nintendo
Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles	Square
The Hobbit	Vivendi
Killer 7	Capcom
Mario Golf	Nintendo
Mario Kart	Nintendo
Mario Tennis	Nintendo
Nightmare Creatures 3	Ubisoft
Onimusha 3	Capcom
P.N. 03	Capcom
Pikmin 2	Nintendo
Sonic Adventure	Infogrames
Starcraft: Ghost	Vivendi
Unity	Lionhead
Viewtiful Joe	Capcom
XGRA	Acclaim



NGC BRINGING YOU NEWS FIRST

NEWSDESK

IN NEWS THIS MONTH



NEW CONSOLE FOR 2005!

GAMECUBE'S SUCCESSOR IS A LOT CLOSER THAN YOU PROBABLY THINK... BY JES BICKHAM

We already know that Nintendo are working on the successor to Gamecube. However, nobody could have predicted that the console – or mind-controlled brain-implant, or whatever it might be – would be ready for a 2005 release. But that's what Nintendo's new president, Satoru Iwata, claimed recently in an interview with news agency Reuters.

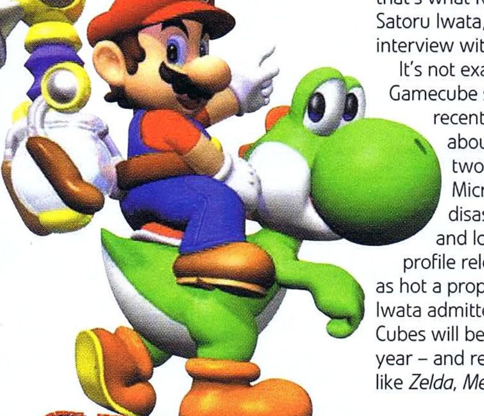
It's not exactly headlines that Gamecube sales have been sliding recently. While the console is just about holding on to the number two spot in Europe – although Microsoft claim otherwise – a disastrous Christmas in the UK and long periods between high-profile releases means the Cube isn't as hot a property as it should be. Indeed, Iwata admitted that ten per cent fewer Cubes will be sold this year than last year – and remember that big hitters like *Zelda*, *Metroid* and *Mario Kart* will be hitting European territories in 2003. Mr Iwata also suggested that "consumers apparently don't want to sit in front of the television to play games for hours" (conveniently forgetting the millions of *GTA: Vice City* owners doing just that).

But what's this all got to do with a rush-release for Nintendo's next console? Well, Nintendo made a lot of mistakes with the N64 (expensive carts, lack of third-party support, rubbish marketing), and Gamecube was their chance to rectify matters. Arguably, this hasn't happened to the extent that any of us would have liked – and although there's loads more third-party games on the Cube than there was on the N64, the fact that so many of them are also available on PS2 and Xbox means it all comes down to system exclusives. And Nintendo's exclusives are spread too thinly to make the Gamecube a must-have machine.

But there's one factor bigger than any others that has contributed to Gamecube's precarious position: the head start that PS2 has.

> "NINTY WANT TO GET THEIR NEXT CONSOLE OUT AT THE SAME TIME AS – OR EVEN BEFORE – SONY"

Hence the fast-track to 2005. Nintendo want to get their next console out at the same time, or even before, the competition releases their next-gen machines. "We will get ready for a battle in 2005, although foreign developers are now saying that rival next-generation



STOP PRESS

CHEAP GAMES! (FOR YANKS) Remember the half-arsed 'budget' (£29.99!) Player's Choice range for N64? Well, Nintendo have announced the return of the range – but so far only in the US. Pah. The new Player's Choice range will initially include Luigi's Mansion, Smash Bros and Wave Race. Hopefully we can expect mildly-discounted games over here too – sooner, rather than later.



NEWSHOUNDS (OR PUPPIES, AT LEAST) This month's news was hastily scrawled on the back of a fag packet by Messrs Bickham, Kitts and Evans. One day they'll get around to writing it earlier in the issue and saving Jes his monthly coronary.



GOOD FOR WHAT SALES YOU

So, exactly how well is Gamecube doing in Europe? It's in second place, say the analysts, selling 1.5 million units in 2002, while Xbox lagged behind with 1.4 million. But in the UK, the story is slightly different. Chart Track figures show that for the week ending 29th December 2002, Xbox shifted 31,735 units, and Gamecube managed a paltry 10,866. The week before, the all-important run-up to Christmas, saw a similar story – Xbox 38,727, Gamecube 15,943. Sobering, eh? Nintendo have plenty to do to keep Gamecube viable until their new console launches. Microsoft are losing pots of money with Xbox, but the excellent bundles they are releasing puts them in a brilliant position for a more profitable successor to the machine. See 'The Big Q' for more...



△ Games like *Zelda* are too few and far between to make GC a must-have console.



△ Likewise, there aren't really enough exclusive titles at the moment, either.

systems won't come until 2006", said Mr Iwata, not only proving that he's willing to make a concerted effort to improve Nintendo's fortunes, but also puncturing the arrogance that was associated with Nintendo under Hiroshi Yamauchi. Nintendo can no longer afford to ignore the competition or market conditions and consumer trends (even the new GBA SP hints at a new direction, looking more like a desirable and, more importantly, 'cool' accessory than a Fisher Price toy).

Further evidence of a new, more aggressive Nintendo was provided by this fundamental declaration of intent: "When we withdraw from the home console business, that's when we withdraw from the videogame business." Nintendo aren't going anywhere, and their renewed vigour is hopefully a sign of future successes.

All of that said, however, the public perception that Gamecube is failing in the 'console war' (as if there is such a thing) is only a tiny part of the story. Nintendo, year on year, make more profit than Sony. GBA dominates the handheld sector, and franchises such as Pokémon still generate astonishing amounts of cash (the two new GBA Pokémon games were the overall top-selling titles in Japan for 2002). The negligible manufacturing costs for the Cube also means that Nintendo still makes a profit on the machine, despite its affordable price, while Microsoft lose money hand-over-fist for every expensive-to-make Xbox sold.

So Nintendo are doing okay. But they're still dedicated to making more of an impact as far as home consoles are concerned, and hopefully whatever 2005 or 2006 brings, it'll be astonishing. One thing, though – please make the new console backwards-compatible with Gamecube games, eh?



△ If the game is anything to go by, the *Metroid* movie should 'rock bells'.

METROID MANIA

The follow-up to Retro's brain-blasting eye-feast is green for go. Yowsers!

Metroid Prime. An astonishing, amazing game, as you all know (even if you won't get to play it until 21st March, curse Nintendo's useless PAL release schedule – why in God's name didn't they release it for Christmas? But we'll have a proper PAL review for you next month anyway). Indeed, so astonishing is it – and so popular in the US – that developers Retro Studios (presumably after a well-earned break) have just started work on a follow-up. Hurrah!

But there's more Samus news – *Metroid*'s being turned into a film! Zide/Perry entertainment has bought the rights to produce an 'official' movie, and the company was previously behind films such American Pie and Final Destination.

Of course, this doesn't mean you'll be seeing the film any time soon, as buying the rights is a very different thing to writing a script, casting actors and shooting it, but we'll keep you posted nonetheless.



△ We want to see bigger bugs, and bigger guns to crush them with.



SHORT CUTS



GAMES CONFIRMED!

Blimey – here's a sudden rush of games confirmed for the humble Cube. First off, brilliant news for shooter fans, as the hardcore *Ikaruga* is set for an April PAL release from Infogrames – see page 70 for our import review of the Japanese version. And not only that, but the brilliant *Burnout 2* has finally been confirmed for the Cube too – expect more details next issue, when we'll get the full 'skinny' from Acclaim. Finally, *F-Zero* has been granted a June release in the US – look for it in UK stores soon after (fingers crossed). Unless, of course, NOE delay it because of the sun shining too much, or something.

MINTERED

Industry legend Jeff Minter – last of the great British bedroom coders, famous for his love of Llamas and the great *Tempest 3000* – is working on a Gamecube game in conjunction with Lionhead studios and that other industry veteran, Peter Molyneux. Unfortunately no screenshots were available as we went to press, but the game, called *Unity*, is an abstract shoot-'em-up that fuses psychedelic lightshows with a variety of gameplay styles. It's hard to explain, and even though it's not as rigid and linear as the PS2's *Rez*, there's a certain amount of comparison to be made there. Hopefully we'll have more details and those all-important pictures next month.

ALIAS SMITH AND JONES
Ever watched the excellent spy drama Alias on Sky One and Channel 4? Good, isn't it? Full of mind-bendingly complicated plotlines and conspiracies, and the lovely Jennifer Garner too, of course. Well, publishers Acclaim have struck a deal with Disney to bring the game of the series to our Cubes. Hopefully it won't be a disappointment...

BAD DREAMS
Ubi Soft this month announced Nightmare Creatures 3, due later in the year on all formats. The previous two games were cacky munt, but here's hoping, eh?

DISAGREE WITH MOST WANTED? Email us at **ngc@futurenet.co.uk** or write to us at Most Wanted, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW listing the three games you're most looking forward to. Every month, we'll tally up the scores on the doors and change the list accordingly.



THIS MONTH

Check out the bonus *Animal Crossing* footage on the DVD, and have a look back to issue 74's review if you don't know what's going on. This month – having deforested Paul's Surfton, it's time to take the magic axe to Dan's favourite apple tree, blame it on Tom Nook, and fool around with that stupid duck on Death Island. Funshine!



The 25 games you've been eagerly rubbing your thighs for over the last 30 days…



1 THE LEGEND OF ZELDA

UK MAY | US MARCH | JAPAN NOW

Lovely, lovely Link. Or Rinky Dink, as they say in cockernee rhyming slang. This game is so good, Nintendo are even wheeling out Shigeru Miyamoto himself to chat to his simpering fans, (us, in other words) and we'll let you know what he said next month. Odds on somebody asking him how his banjo skills are coming on: 1 to 4. It's really funny when they do that.



2 METROID PRIME

UK MARCH 21 | US NOW | JAPAN NOW

A measly one month left until the UK version of this dangerous little beauty staggers out of Nintendo's PAL conversion holding cell at Camp X-Ray in Guantanamo Bay. After spending so long in captivity, Samus will be itching for action, so make sure you've got a spare £40 (or some crap to trade).



3 MARIO KART GC

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

We've been revisiting the N64 version of late, and Jes actually managed to do the Mario Raceway shortcut twice in a row. He crashed into the wall on the third lap, which prompted Geraint to call him a 'casual gamer'. Geraint has since found that raw steak *really* is an excellent remedy for a black eye.



4 F-ZERO GC

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN MAY

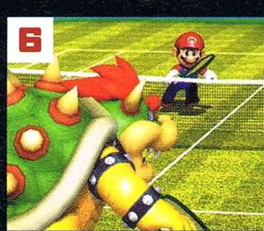
We've been playing the N64 version of this too, and it's scary just how good it is compared to any current racing games. What's even scarier is the Big Hand track, which we used to be able to complete with our eyes shut. Now we can just about do one lap at granny speed, before falling off and crying.



5 ANIMAL CROSSING

UK TBA | US NOW | JAPAN NOW

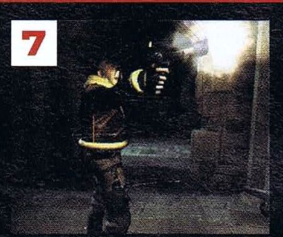
Look here, Nintendo. The UK is your biggest European market. Anyone smart enough to want to play this in Germany or France can probably read English anyway. So don't give us that lame guff about the cost of translation not being worth it. Right now, Bill Gates is laughing at you.



6 MARIO TENNIS

UK 2003 | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

And this one as well. There could have been a great office tournament, but since nobody dares play Martin at it, there wasn't much point. With any luck the Gamecube version will have a handicap system so that truly talentless players won't have to suffer thrashings on such a regular basis. (*Sacked – Ed*)



7 RESIDENT EVIL 4

UK TBA | US TBA | JAPAN TBA

If you thought Nintendo could be a bit vague when it comes to release dates, check out Capcom – they list this new *Resi* as 200X, which isn't a date at all. Unless they mean several centuries hence, when the Emperor Caligula will be resurrected to impose Roman numerals on the cowering populace.



8 1080°: AVALANCHE

UK WINTER | US 2003 | JAPAN 2003

Here's one we haven't dug out on the N64 just yet, although no doubt we will in due course. The winter release date worries us a bit. Remember when the original was held back because Nintendo wanted to release it when the UK was nice and snowy? If it slips in Japan, we're looking at winter 2004…



9 SOUL CALIBUR 2

UK AUTUMN | US AUTUMN | JAPAN SUMMER

Amazing! Now Namco's magnificent beat-'em-up features Rinky. The old Rinky Dink. Link! Yes indeed, and you'd have to say he makes a better bonus character than the PS2's Heihachi from *Tekken*, or Xbox's Spawn from… erm… We'll have to get back to you on that one. Anyway, it's all good news.



#	Game	Description	UK	US	JAPAN
10	VIEWTIFUL JOE	Veeee-*yoo*-ti-ful Joe!	Q2 2003	Q2 2003	SUMMER
11	HARVEST MOON	Organic farming goodness.	TBA	SPRING	DEC
12	MARIO GOLF	Mazza gets serious with a 9 iron.	Q3 2003	Q3 2003	SUMMER
13	FINAL FANTASY	Four players and GBA linkage.	TBA	TBA	SPRING
14	KILLER 7	Stylised guns and anime action.	Q4 2003	2003	2003
15	STARFOX ARMADA	Better than *Adventures*. Please.	TBA	TBA	TBA
16	PROJECT NUMBER 03	Capcom's sci-fi shooter.	Q2 2003	Q2 2003	MARCH
17	PRO EVO SOCCER 2	FIFA-thumping Konami footie sim.	TBA	TBA	SPRING
18	HITMAN 2	A murderous work of genius.	APRIL	APRIL	TBA
19	ENTER THE MATRIX	*Max Payne* was not the one.	MAY	MAY	TBA
20	DRIVER 3	Top-secret car theft and crime.	2003	2003	TBA
21	XIII	Cel-shaded first-person shooter.	Q3 2003	2003	2003
22	BROKEN SWORD 3	Adventure and intrigue. Yep.	2003	2003	2003
23	CONFLICT: DESERT STORM	See right for more details.	2003	2003	TBA
24	SPLINTER CELL	Tom Clancy goes stealthy on us.	MAY	MAY	TBA
25	DEAD PHOENIX	*Panzer Dragoon* with soldiers.	Q3 2003	Q2 2003	Q2 2003

WRITE TO… MAILBOX/NGC/30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW OR EMAIL NGC@FUTURENET.CO.UK

DID YOU KNOW? *F-Zero AC*, the arcade version of *F-Zero AC*, runs on the Gamecube-based Triforce hardware. It's called Triforce because it's a collaboration between Nintendo, Sega and Namco – three companies, see. Plus the obvious Rinky Dink connection.



△ Don the desert boots of a US commando and stuff your sack with plenty of grenades.



△ Team guidance is a necessary skill.


△ Off in search of the enemy? Or oil?

STORMIN!

Want a piece of Saddam's black gold? This way is safer than joining the army.

Much as Georgie Bush would like to go Rambo on Saddam Hussein and liberate his oil, in real life things have to be a bit more subtle than that.

Hence *Conflict Desert Storm*, a Clancy-style take on the original Gulf War. It puts you in the desert boots of a US commando, right in the sweaty part of Iraq, on the day GB's old man started having his own crack at Baghdad.

The aim is to guide your team through missions, spoiling Saddam's party before taking a potshot at the man himself. Team orders must be issued to keep everyone pulling in the same direction, and goodies can be appropriated from Iraqi weapon dumps, providing firepower for those instances when air support isn't available.

By all accounts, the original Xbox version was a decent stab at combining action and strategy. The developers are currently working on a sequel, but that doesn't mean Gamecube is getting a port of an outdated title. Many of the enhancements from the sequel are being built into the Gamecube update, so it's a bit like *Conflict Desert Storm 1.5*.

We'll do a proper preview job on it very soon, but until then feast your eyes on these first dusty Gamecube screens.

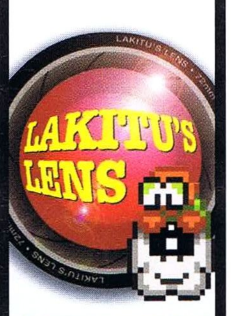


△ This means more oil for Dubya's SUV.



△ You can pilfer extra firepower from any Iraqi weapons dump you happen upon.

DID YOU KNOW? Colin Powell, of Gulf War: Episode I fame, likes it if you pronounce his name to rhyme with 'colon'. And this man is now the US Secretary of State. Help!



SEEN NINTENDO STUFF ON THE BOX? OTHER THAN ON A PROGRAMME ABOUT GAMES, OBVIOUSLY. LET LAKITU KNOW!




GAME POY

Richard Tann from Market Harborough was relaxing in front of Dragonball Z episode 237 (Unlikely Friendship) when he spotted this Nintendo reference. It's a customised old-style Game Boy, or 'Game Poy' as Dragonball's lawyers will no doubt insist. And the custom feature? It's packed with plastic explosive, which is certainly an effective way to add a bit of force feedback. Perhaps this could be the GBA SP's secret feature…

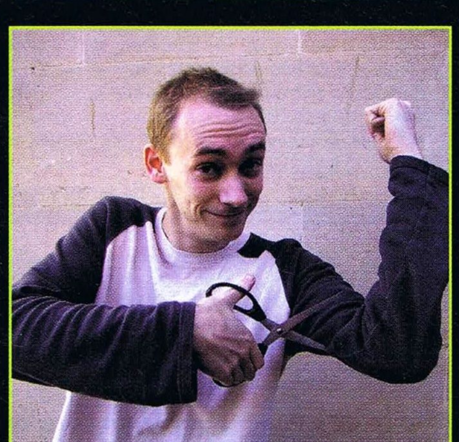
WRITE TO LAKITU'S LENS, NGC, 30 MONMOUTH STREET, BATH, BA1 2BW

Entries sent with picture evidence will win a Gamecube game

VIRTUAL REALITY

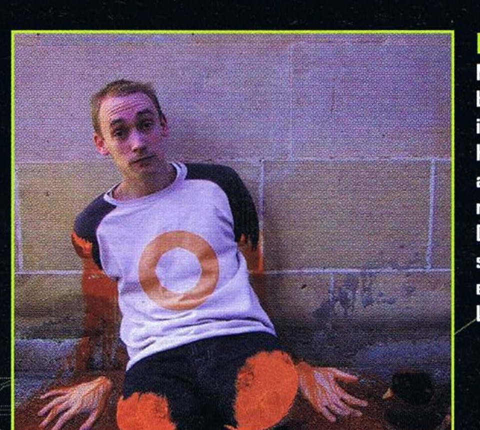
NINTENDO GAMING MOMENTS 'COME TRUE'.

THIS MONTH Who needs limbs? Rayman told us to do this…



THE TEST

Does removing the superfluous bits of flesh known as 'arms' and 'legs' really make a man as athletic as Rayman? Rusty scissors at the ready, it's time to find out.



RESULT

Maybe it takes a bit of time before it starts to work. He isn't jumping around very much though. Come on, you slacker, put some effort into it. Useless.

SHORT CUTS



LATEST NEWS FROM THE UK'S MOST POPULAR GAMES SITE

Want to see moving footage of the latest hot Gamecube titles, such as *Soul Calibur 2*, *F-Zero*, *Killer 7* and more? Hook your brain up to the internet and head over to www.gamesradar.com, where you can gorge your eyes on Gamecube video goodness and all the latest news.

FREELOADER

Blimey – Datel's Action Replay is finally here! It's a disc that allows you to use thousands of built-in cheats to fiddle around with your games, and also lets you tinker with code to come up with your own cheats and effects.

The really big news, however, is that the Action Replay incorporates the much-anticipated Freeloader. This feature makes your Gamecube completely region-free, allowing you to play US and Japanese games on a UK console. Or UK games on an import machine, even. A godsend for those of you fed up for waiting for those far-off PAL releases, or indeed those games that don't yet have official confirmation of a UK release, such as *Animal Crossing*. Action Replay will be available by the time you read this, priced at £29.99. We'll investigate just how well it works and bring you a full review in the next issue of **NGC**.



△ Soon (ROFL) you'll be able to (LMAO, LMAO) play with (LOL) thousands of users (BRB, LOL LOL) online!



△ If you'd like to meet us online for some sword-swinging, magic-casting boomba-slaying acion, post…



△ …a topic on the www.gamesradar.com forums and we'll sort out something special for the coming months.

ONLINE DETAILS!

Sega spill the beans on their plans to get *PSO* up and running online…

Contrary to our admission in the review of *Phantasy Star Online* this month, we have managed to play *PSO* online!

Sega invited us to their offices – on our deadline day, hence the 'stop press!' nature of this news – to give the PAL version of the game the once-over online. And it works just fine.

What's even better is that the game *will* be playable online from the day it hits stores nationwide. Unfortunately, at the time of writing, Sega are still in discussions with Nintendo as to *when exactly* the modems will be made available , but they are "confident" that they'll be released around the same time as the game (which is March 7th, although www.amazon.co.uk has them down for March 21st). Still, if the worst happens – ie the modem isn't out for the game's launch – we have been assured that anyone looking to get online straight away will be able to import a modem from any territory and it will work just fine on their PAL Gamecubes.

Registration for the game can be done via a PC or Mac or through your Gamecube, and your first 30 days online will be absolutely free. Subsequent subscription fees haven't been finalised as yet, but Sega's current estimate for monthly charges are around £4.99. Players wil be able to buy months in 'bulk' to keep themselves from having to re-apply every 30 days.

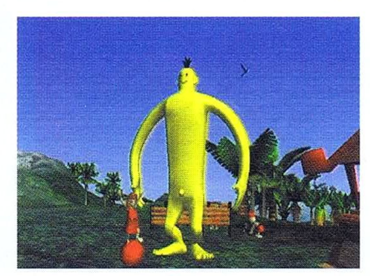
The bad news is that a keyboard won't be available at launch, but there are plans to distribute the ASCII GC keyboard in the UK *only*, around May.

Finally, for those worried that the new Action Replay may harm the experience, Sega told us that they are extremely confident that they can now block hackers from ruining the game in future.



GETTING GENEROUS?

Well no. Not particularly. But Nintendo's new 'free game' offer is a start at the very least…


△ Can the 'bellybutton' lure the public to by a Cube? Gosen seems to think so…

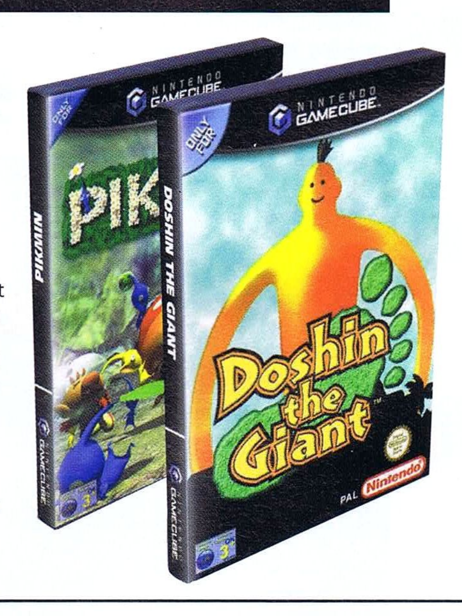


For a limited period of time you can buy a Gamecube with a choice of one of seven games absolutely free.

The available games are as follows. *Eternal Darkness*, *Wave Race*, *Disney's Magical Mirror* (watch it fly off the shelves, folks!) *Doshin the Giant*, *Luigi's Mansion*, *NBA Courtside* and *Pikmin*. The offer will run from February the 3rd to March 20th 2003.

As nice an idea as this is, why in God's name didn't they think of doing this over Christmas? Do Nintendo of Europe not think they may have been just a *little* bit late with this? Furthermore, how about putting *Mario Sunshine* in that list, maybe even *Starfox*, perhaps? It would be a damn sight more enticing for new adopters than *Mickey's Magical Mirror*.

With a variety of Xbox and PS2 bundles still being promoted, it's going to take more than that to boost sales. And there's no incentive for existing GC owners to go out and splash the cash. Still, like we said, it's a start at least…



YIUJI NAKA SPEAKS
The creator of Virtua Fighter and PSO is working on the third game in the Sonic series, to be shown at the annual E3 show in Los Angeles in May. Here's hoping that it's a bit better than the second one…

CHINA CRISIS
The Chinese market is potentially the biggest on Earth. Nintendo wants a piece of it. But because piracy is rife, they won't let Gamecube anywhere near it. Instead they plan to release hardware that's several generations old, such as the Famicom and Super Famicom. Come on, guys – at least let them have some N64s.

JUST WHO IS NUMBER TWO IN EUROPE?



Δ Ah, sweet, sweet *Metroid*. If you've seen the DVD on this month's cover…



Δ …you'll probably be smacking your lips over it right now. If any game can…





Δ …help reinforce Gamecube's position in the market, it's this one. Oh yes.

With PlayStation 2 so ludicrously far ahead of the competition, to get even close to such an unassailable lead would take a miracle of biblical proportions. Its number one position is unquestionable. The number two slot's present occupant, however, is still in dispute.

A short while after Christmas, Microsoft proclaimed that they had 20 per cent of the European market. That's ten per cent more than Nintendo and a figure which implies that they are outselling Gamecube by a ratio of two-to-one. Quick to ensure that no one would believe Microsoft's 'lies', Nintendo reasserted their claim that they were still number two, having sold 1.5 million units Europe-wide. Unfortunately, there is no research body which covers the whole of Europe, which means an accurate figure is virtually impossible to obtain.



FIGURE PAINTING

Chart Track – the research body which monitors hardware and software sales across the UK by acquiring over-the-counter retail sales from stores, directly from their own systems, points towards Xbox as being slightly ahead. Indeed, up to the 2nd of December, Xbox had sold 589,284 units

> "IN THE CHRISTMAS PERIOD, XBOX REPUTEDLY OUTSOLD GAMECUBE BY 100 PER CENT"

in the UK, to Gamecube's 436,488. More importantly though, in the crucial Christmas period Xbox reputedly outsold Gamecube by a staggering 100 per cent in the UK alone, prompting Microsoft's senior vice president, Robbie Bach, to boast: "Xbox is the next-generation videogame system of choice and the clear No 2 across the United States, Canada and throughout Europe".

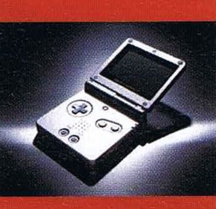
Not so, says Nintendo's Shelly Friend. "As far as we're concerned, we're still number two in Europe. We had sold 1.5 million units across Europe up until Christmas, and our records show that this puts us in the second spot… we're confident that our figure is correct." A figure which was indeed corroborated by market research firm ScreenDigest, which estimated that while Nintendo had sold a total of 1.5 million units, Microsoft were lagging slightly behind at 1.4 million units across Europe over the whole of last year.

THE HARD SELL

Whatever the situation, though, one thing is abundantly clear – there really isn't that much in it so far. It's also worth noting that Microsoft's attractive bundle packages in the UK has made a huge difference to the Xbox's sales. The Chart Track figures show that while sales were neck-and-neck up until November, the introduction of Xbox's attractive four-game bundle significantly increased its sales over Nintendo's – especially considering that Nintendo failed to release a big game over the Christmas period. What a mistake-a to make-a…

Whether or not Nintendo's new offer (see Getting Generous on the opposite page), combined with the release of some of their biggest titles will make a difference remains to be seen. It all depends on Nintendo's ability to push sales with a marketing drive that reflects the undoubted quality of the games they are trying to support. This was certainly the case in the US, where an aggressive advertising campaign (which included a wonderfully cinematic – if a little cheesy – *Metroid* commercial) helped drive exceptional sales at the launch of *Metroid Prime* while making great inroads in increasing their user-base across the pond.

Here's hoping that Nintendo can pull off a similar feat over here…



DON'T FORGET…

That in terms of *harware* sales, Nintendo are certainly, and undoubtedly number two. The GBA has racked up an impressive six million units worldwide in just 18 months, with around 1.8 million units getting into the hands of gamers in the UK alone – and of course, there's the imminent release of the GBA SP which should be tempting even more new users, as well as attracting existing owners who may be looking to upgrade. Both consoles are obviously important to Nintendo and when you look at the big picture, Nintendo are in an extremely good position – and with more and more big games (like *Final Fantasy: Crystal Chronicles* and *Metroid Prime*) starting to utilise the link-up feature, perhaps more gamers will look to the Gamecube as a new way of experiencing forthcoming games.

NINTENDO PLUS FANZINE
Many thanks to Adam Norton and Francis Murphy for the great fanzine they sent our way last month – our apologies for not featuring it as heavily as we'd have liked this month. At an impressive 70 pages, Issue 1 of Nintendo Plus is stuffed with fantastic features, and frankly, some of the strangest and downright side-splitting editorial we've ever had the pleasure to read. Issue 2 will boast an interview with Wil Overton as well as some cover art designed especially for Nintendo Plus. If you'd like to grab a copy or get involved email nintendoplus@hotmail.com.



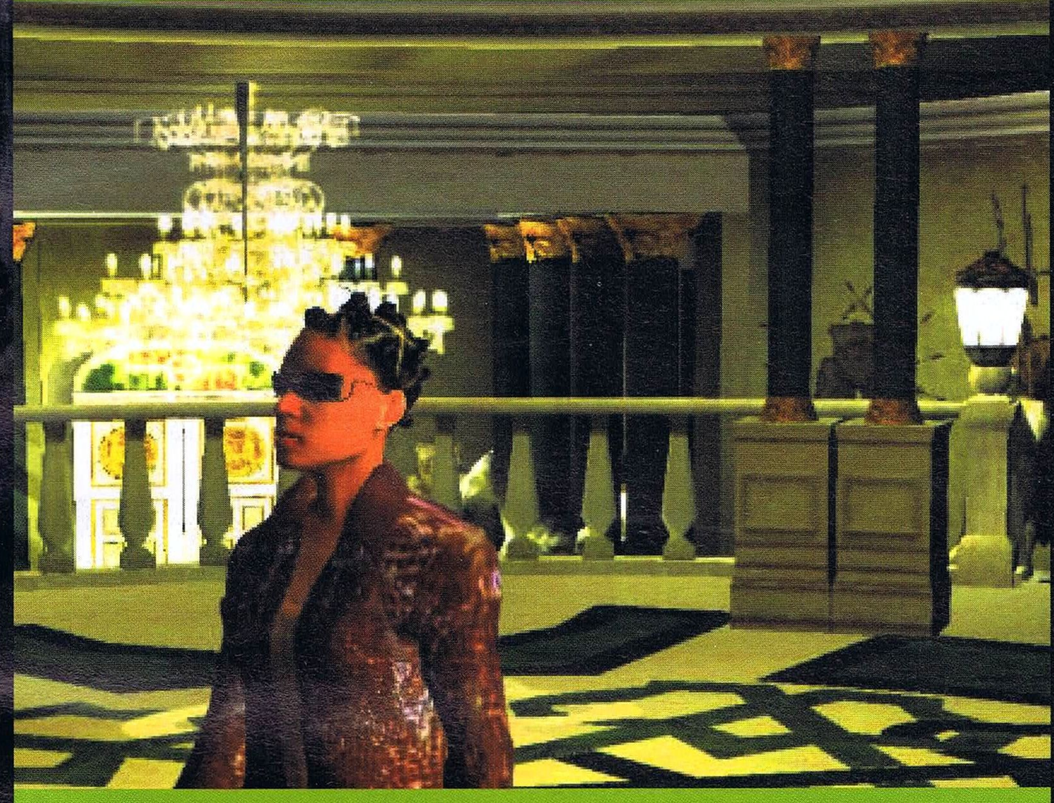
ENTER THE MATRIX

We get our filthy mitts on the hottest film licence of 2003 – *exclusively*. Join us as we go hands-on with the latest build and put it, and its developers, through their paces…

ENTER THE MATRIX

Just how deep does the rabbit hole go?

GIMME SOME SKIN





The level of attention lavished on the characters is stunning. It's impressive enough that the dialogue has been provided by the actors from the movie and not some second-rate impressionist, but all the movement and animation on the character models has been motion-captured from them too. Keanu Reeves, Jada Pinkett Smith and the rest of the cast were all drafted in to help with the game – the results show that the effort was certainly worth it.

Standing under the biggest motion-capture rig (a huge framework of cameras that can spot movement from every angle) ever used for a game, the actors and martial arts experts had to go through the gruelling process of getting over 4,000 captured shots, and another 4,000 different moves and movements to be integrated into combat.

Once this was done, the actors had their features mapped and, with 42 separate motion sensors glued to their faces, had to laboriously run through all their dialogue in the game to make sure that facial movements and lip-synching was as accurate as possible. Even the costume designers from the film were drafted in to help design the costumes for the digital characters in the game.



▲ Ghost tests out his assault rifle. Note the debris flying off the impact points in the distance? Shiny have taken care to make scenery as destructible as possible.



▲ The areas we saw were disused warehouses, sewers and whatnot – relatively unimpressive, but the level of interaction with the environments certainly wasn't.

> "THE GAME NOT ONLY RUNS PARALLEL TO THE FILM'S STORY, IT DIPS IN AND OUT OF IT, TOO."

On paper, *Enter the Matrix* is an impressive concept. You see, the game isn't your normal film licence – it's not even close. Rather than just getting the rights to the film and bashing out a substandard platformer or adventure, *Enter the Matrix* is actually an integral chapter of the entire Matrix universe. The game not only runs parallel with the Matrix: Reloaded story, it also dips in and out of the film's narrative. What this means is that if you just watch the movie, you won't get the whole truth. While Neo is busy kung-fuing his way through the world's supply of leather trousers, the other characters that appear in the film are busy on different missions. The game follows these individuals through scenes that appear in Reloaded and, more importantly, the scenes that don't.

The two main characters in the game are Niobe (played by Will Smith's missus), and Ghost, a, well, Zen-Buddhist Apache assassin, if you will. You're able to choose either character from the beginning (each has slightly different skills) and you then follow that character's story to its end. You don't get to play as Neo at all (he's busy in the film, remember), but there are a number of occasions, which also appear in the movie, where he pops up to do battle alongside you. So pretty much every main character from the film is in the game – nothing particularly special there, admittedly – but when you consider that every single one of the main characters has been motion-captured and voice acted by the proper actors (yup, even Keanu Reeves) you'll begin to appreciate the staggering attention to detail that has gone into making this game.

This wasn't just Shiny's doing either. The Wachowski brothers and their production team have been involved in the game's development to an unprecedented degree. The script was written by them. The environments were designed with the help of the film's set designer, and all the weaponry models were worked on by the film's own armourer. It's a new way of doing things – less a tie-in than a part of the story in its own right, a game that's been built alongside the film, with the sole purpose of ▶

HACKING



This has to be one of the most intriguing aspects of the game. There's an operating system within the game that you can access to try your hand at hacking. It works a little like a cross between MS DOS, BASIC and a text adventure. There are no instructions included – you have to figure it out yourself. If you get good enough at hacking, you can download fighting styles and moves as well as game secrets.

TURN OVER
For detailed information on *Enter The Matrix*'s superb fighting system and features…



DID YOU KNOW? Laurence Fishburne's first line in the 1995 film Higher Learning was "Welcome to the real world…" Not that that has any particular significance.

▲ Sewers. Natural home of modern heroes on a world-saving missions.

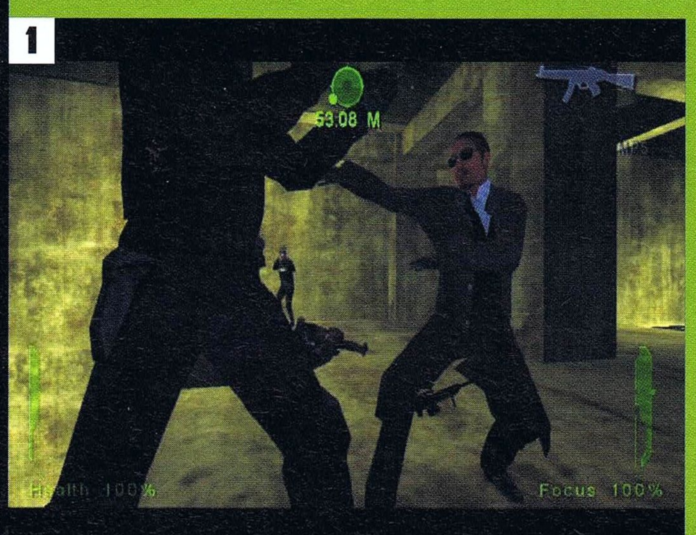
▲ This intriguing area was one of the most impressive that we saw.

▲ Running while focused opens up a whole world of moves like the extended jump.

FIGHTING FRENZY

There are so many fighting animations in the game that it's bordering on the obscene. Every few minutes you see new moves you never expected. But despite its depth, it's very easy to get the hang of.

1



If your character doesn't have a weapon they'll automatically hunker down and get ready for some fisticuffs. When a group of enemies gets close to you, you'll lock on to the nearest and adopt your fighting stance – let the balletic ass-kicking begin.

2



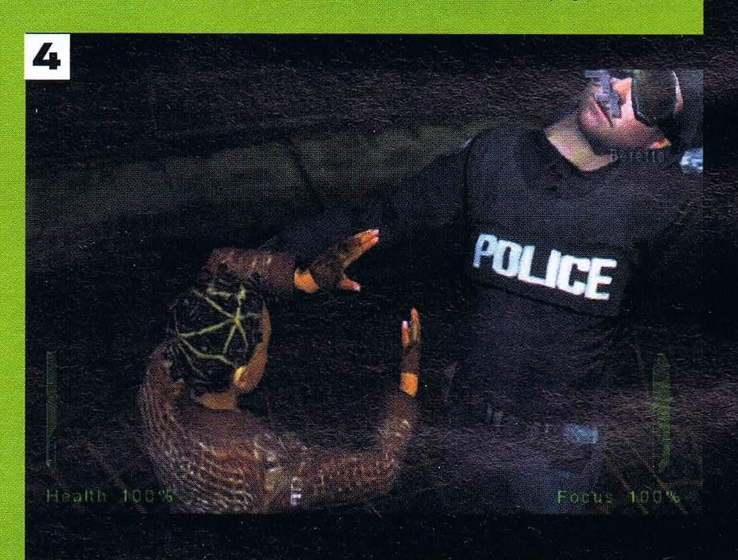
There's one button for kick and one for punch. The type of strike depends on the angle and direction the analogue is pointing in. Figuring out combos is down to trial and error. Powerful hits like this kick from Niobe will send enemies flying.

3



Even more devastating attacks can be unleashed depending on your position and the number of enemies. The fighting system allows you take out enemies from all angles, in surprisingly inventive ways. Here, Ghost twists his way out of a hold.

4



Activate your Focus meter mid-fight, the action slows down and you're able to time attacks and counter-attacks more effectively. The camera also pans around to give a better view of the action – often showing spittle being punched out of mouths.



bringing an experience as Matrix-like to the game as that in the movies themselves.

JACKING IN

That's the aesthetics taken care of , but what about the game? Well, so far so very good. It's still some way off completion and there were severe restrictions placed on what we could and couldn't see, but it was very impressive stuff nonetheless.

The game is essentially broken down into three main sections: third-person action; driving; and a small flying section through the tunnels of Zion in real, non-Matrix Earth. It's the third-person sections that take up the vast majority of the gameplay, and it's in this mode that we spent most of our time. It's ambitious and stylish, and the volume of work that's gone into the characters and the camera movement is immediately apparent. Even when your character is in 'normal' mode, you have access to a staggering array of moves. Whether you have a weapon or are just indulging in the superb hand-to-hand combat, you'll be amazed at just how many different types of animation routines there are. Back-flipping and shooting, grabbing and elbowing, leg-sweeping and arm-twisting, and countless other moves are at your disposal – all of which are pulled off with a smooth, realistic grace. The moves don't require too much thought, either, as they're all context-sensitive. While they require a degree of dextrous button-stabbing, moves are heavily influenced by your position within the environment, and

FIGHT!



The Matrix licence was hotly contested – after all, it's a dead cert to sell once Warner's Matrix hype-machine gets in full swing. Shiny, thanks to heavy investment in new technology and a shared vision for the game with the brothers Wachowski, managed to fight off stiff competition from the likes of Hideo Kojima and Bungie.

"BY FOCUSING YOU CAN SLOW DOWN TIME AND OPEN UP NEW SKILLS FOR YOUR CHARACTER"



▲ Use a gun in this room and you can obliterate everything. EVERYTHING!

▲ You can grab incoming guards and throw them at the wall behind.

your proximity to, and the number of, enemies you're fighting. This is all noteworthy in itself, but by 'focusing' your character (see the oft-copied Bullet Time feature in The Matrix) you can slow down time and open up new skills for your character. If you're legging it away from an agent, for example, and just around the corner a SWAT team is lying in wait. By focusing your character, you can, say, run up and around the wall, and launch yourself at them with a flurry of kicks. With practice, five-man take-downs are possible, no matter how well armed they all are.

Naturally, guns (and lots of them) also play a large part in the game – the characters under your control are all very handy with the old bang-sticks. You can, for example, blast a couple of enemies ahead of you while using your gun as a melee weapon to take out anyone sneaking up behind. You can even run on walls while shooting, as well as cartwheeling between areas of cover, blasting anyone who's looking to root you out in the process.

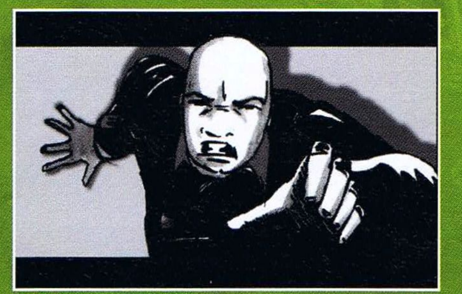
It all works brilliantly, and it's a beautifully accessible battle system, but the icing on the cake has to be the stunningly cinematic camera work. Fighting while 'focused' makes the camera zoom in and pan around your silky fighting skills – it's just like in the movies, but it also allows you to get the best possible view of the deftly controlled carnage. It really does give you the impression that you're battling it out Matrix-style.

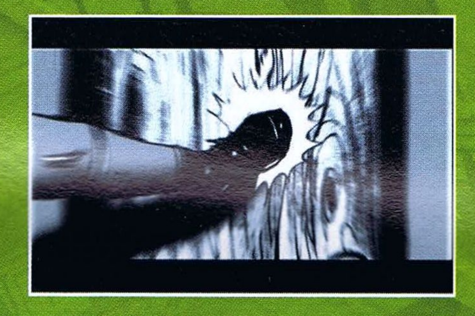
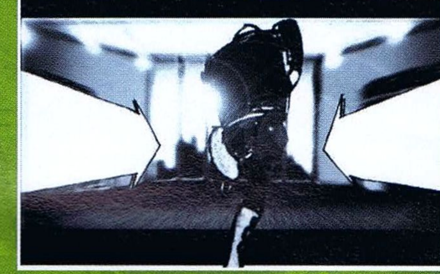
ACCESS DENIED

Unfortunately, that's about as much as we can tell you about the gameplay details (you'll see more in-depth descriptions spread around these pages). Mission structure, for

AAAND... ACTION!

To make the game as accurate as possible, the Wachowskis directed the in-game movies themselves. Every sequence was heavily storyboarded – in this scene, one of the characters legs it from the cops before throwing himself through a window…

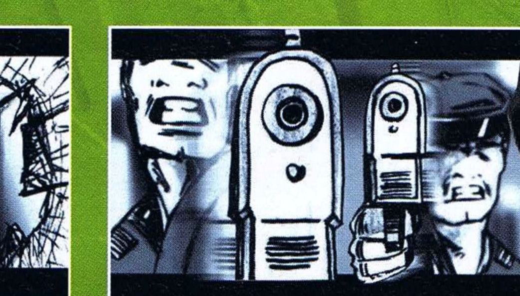












TURN OVER
For our Q&A with the Dave Perry, the guy heading up the game of this years forthcoming blockbuster…

INTERVIEW MATRIX

After an extensive play session we got to sit down and chat to Dave Perry, who's leading the game's development. Here's what he had to say on *Enter The Matrix*...

Q At the start of the game, you say that there are two characters to select. Are their paths through the game different?

A *It's mostly the same, but there are some differences. If you choose Ghost, for example, you'll get to fight Trinity, which is a pretty cool sequence. But, as you'll see in the film, it makes no sense for Niobe to fight her so this part isn't in her path. There's also an 'Infiltrate and Protect' mission which is different depending on who you choose, as one of the character's objectives is to protect the other.*

In the game's driving sections, Niobe's more skilled behind the wheel, so she has control of the car. Ghost is the weapons guru. He actually blends gun moves with his Kung Fu.

Q Neo would have been the obvious choice as the game's lead character? How come you didn't use him?

A *Neo has become The One. He is practically a God, and he can bend the rules of the Matrix at will. He can hold out his hand and stop bullets, or jump inside agents and explode them. If he is overpowered, he can simply fly away. We felt a playable character needed an element of danger to make an interesting game. Secondly, the Matrix universe is the vision of the Wachowskis. They envisioned the game as a parallel story that crossed the film at key points. Neo's story is being told in the film, so the Wachowskis wanted to give gamers the chance to grow other key characters from the Matrix universe.*

"THE GAME IS A PARALLEL STORY THAT CROSSES THE FILM AT KEY POINTS"

Q Do you have any idea how long the game will take to complete?

A *I played it through with Niobe before coming here to check for bugs. It took me roughly 20 hours to play through from start to finish, and I knew exactly where to go and what to do. Obviously it'll take someone fresh to the game a little longer. There's also Ghost to take through the game as well.*

Q Are the games being optimised for all systems, or do you have a lead format from which the game has been ported?

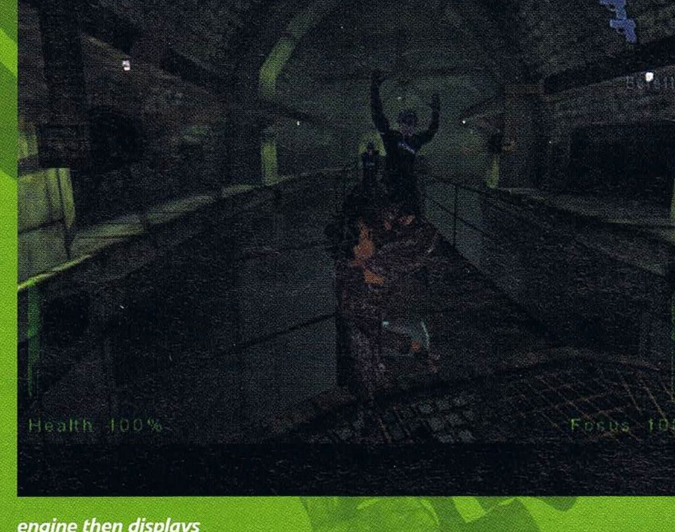
A *We've really tried to play to the strengths of each format. We've developed a custom cross-platform game engine, so the game has been optimised for each system as much as possible.*

Q How does the Gamecube version differ from the other versions?

A *The GC's great at dealing with colour, so it comes across as being extremely rich and vibrant compared to the other versions – but there were a couple of problems. The joypad hasn't got as many buttons, which we found difficult – we had to get a system that worked across all three platforms because we weren't simply porting the game. There's a massive amount of data in the game, especially with digital video. So far we've squeezed the game into three discs, and that's after compression. We're trying to get that number down to two like Resident Evil, but as it stands so far, it's going to be three discs.*

Q The level of detail and animation on the character models is amazing. Did this pose any problems when trying to keep the game and character movements running smoothly?

A *We start with a set of movie-quality assets that were more detailed than what's really needed for any of today's processors. Our game engine then displays the characters according to the needs of the game at any given moment and the capability of the hardware. This is combined with the animations from a custom fighting program that our programmers have built. It allows the animation director to feed in literally thousands of animations and control the characters right down to the movement of their fingers. It's really been a surprisingly smooth process and I am very proud of the team for pulling it off.*



Q There's been a massive amount of collaboration with the film's producers. How receptive were they to devoting their time to help you develop the game?

A *It's been a great experience – we've learned so much on so many levels. The Wachowskis completely opened the doors for us. We've had access to anything and everything we've needed, like the set designs, the film talent, the crew, the costumes... everything. From now on, when there's a Hollywood-to-game project, everyone's going to want to do it this way...*

Q The hacking feature is an interesting addition. Could you elaborate a little on how it works?

A *The hacking system in Enter The Matrix is like a game within a game, and it's a means for players to discover and unlock secrets about their game and their character, by 'hacking' into the game's operating system. The player will also be able to interact with other characters, in a similar way to how Neo and Trinity communicated with each other at the start of the first movie. It plays somewhat like a text adventure from the old days of gaming. It's just some more depth for Matrix fans.*

▲ Lighting was pretty rudimentary and not a reflection on the final code.

▲ The old corridor. The old door. The old Corrie-door. WAH! WAH! WAH!

▲ Matrix fans are going to go mental over this on its release.

THINK THAT'S AIR YOU'RE BREATHING?



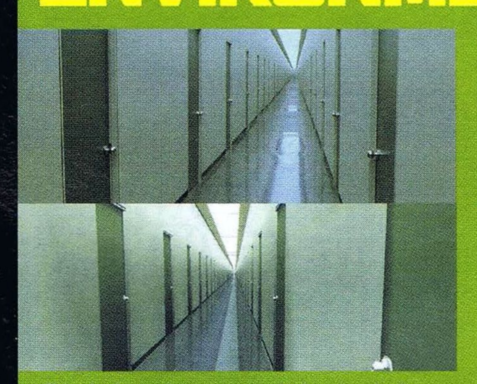
Part of the film's appeal was the fact that the characters could (within reason) do anything they wanted to. Leaping tall buildings in a single bound, run up walls, fly through the air guns blazing, and cartwheel around like a gymnast after a six-pack of Tango. *Enter The Matrix* doesn't disappoint. As well as the 'normal' moves like climbing and peeking around corners, you can hang off rails with your legs to shoot enemies below, leap over huge gaps, backflip while shooting and maintaining your target (picking weapons up simultaneously), and even run along lengths of walls and around corners while blasting anything around you. The game also has a hidden RPG element to it which develops your character as you go. Although your rating is inaccessible without hacking (see the 'Hacking' margin note), it silently boosts skills such as Focusing every time you pull off impressive combos or complete levels skilfully.



▲ Stopping and zooming in on the action allows for more accuracy.

ENVIRONMENTAL

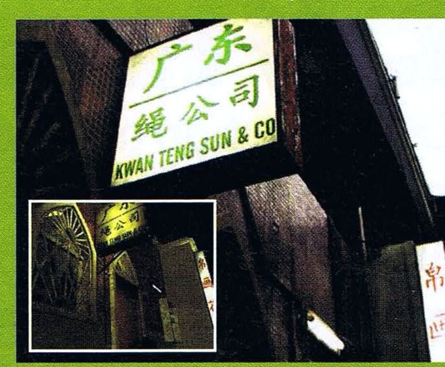
As the game is so closely linked with the film, many scenes take place in the same locations as the movie. Naturally, Shiny and the brothers wanted the environments to be as similar to the film as possible.



Shiny had complete access to the locations in the film, and all were faithfully replicated thanks to the services of the film's set designer.



They took a staggering 25,000 reference photos of the sets to ensure the accuracy of textures and geometry for the locations.



As you can see from these side-by-side comparisons, the work's paid off. The environments in the game are fantastic recreations of those in the movie.

> "SPENDING TIME BLASTING ONE ROOM TO TINY PIECES WAS A GREAT DEAL OF FUN"

example, remains something of a mystery – the areas open for play were rather uninspiring, with minimal texture work and lighting. Just a few rooms where respawning enemies and wooden crates (which satisfyingly buckled and splintered on impact) were the only real environmental features to speak of. These areas seemed like large training rooms designed to show off the characters' abilities. There were a number of weapons on offer, too, and spending some quality time blasting one room to tiny pieces (and we really do mean to *pieces*) was a great deal of fun – and again, indicated the staggering level of detail you can expect from the game.

The respawning enemies, despite not sporting an incredible level of AI, are surprisingly evasive. They have the ability to climb onto higher ground, dodge and block attacks and take cover effectively, and run away and surprise you from the rear. Like we said before, you can expect these kinds of things to be vastly improved by the time the game gets a release.

Still, despite not being given completely free reign over the main game, we did get to see footage of some of the other levels that will appear, and these all looked a great deal more interesting than the practice room we got to play in. Unfortunately, details are scarce, as Warner Brothers are very cagey about any plot spoilers being leaked, so closely intertwined are game and film. We'll be keeping a beady eye on this one as The Matrix: Reloaded nears release…

AGENTS



While the police, security guards and SWAT teams make up much of the fist-fodder, you'll come face to face with nice people such as Agent Smith at various key moments. Like in the films, such encounters are not to be taken lightly, and it won't take you long to figure out that running is the only option.

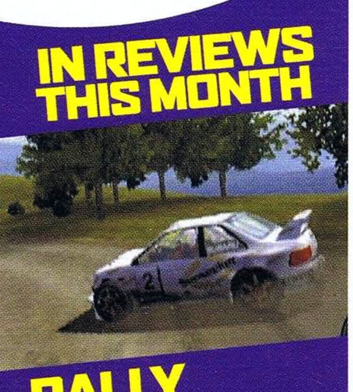
IN THE FIRST MATRIX FILM… The traitor who is conspiring with Agent Smith says his name is Ragan, that he wants to be an actor and to remember nothing. Wonder who that could be…



NGC THE VERDICT YOU DESERVE!

REVIEWS

IN REVIEWS THIS MONTH



RALLY CHAMP
TOP-NOTCH RALLYING MAD-SKILLZ! P48



MICRO MACHINES
TINY CARS RETURN. RETURN! P47



WHAT IS PAL?
PAL is the UK's broadcasting standard. When you buy a Cube here it will be PAL. When you buy a Cube in the US or Japan it'll be NTSC – a different broadcasting standard, and the reason the two don't mix. Import games are NTSC games.



RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Capcom's horror prequel hits the UK in a welter of blood and guts. Altogether now: braaiinnnns! P36





SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

Bigger and better than the first game? Or simply bigger? Find out everything there is to know about this monkey mega-sequel… P42



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

Gamecube goes online in the UK at last! It couldn't do it in a better way, as *PSO* is really quite good… P50

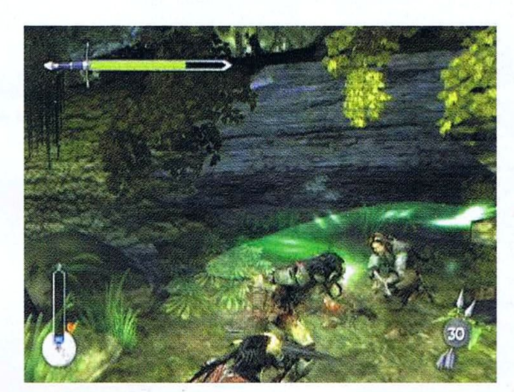


RAYMAN 3

You either love him or hate him, the freakish limbless runt. But there's no denying that this latest instalment in the French platforming series is something a little bit special… P56

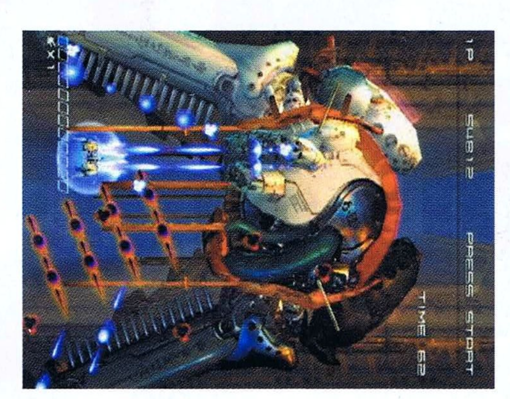
HOW IT WORKS...

Our reviews are the biggest, most comprehensive on Planet Earth. We devote more pages to the games you want to know about, and give you more detail than anyone else. And in the new **NGC** things have just got a whole lot better: our Field of Play and Event-o-meter regulars will pinpoint exactly when and where games get good, and yet our verdicts remain the most honest and most stringent around.



LORD OF THE RINGS THE TWO TOWERS

EA finally port over their smash-hit PS2 game-o-film. But is it a blockbuster or a damp squib? P64



IKARUGA

Geraint takes a good long look at the Jap import of this cracking shooter. (And no, the review layout isn't wrong...) P70

1 GET INTO THE GAME

The quickest and smartest way to get started...



2 FIELD OF PLAY

The game's best bit taken apart and analysed...



3 EVENT-O-METER

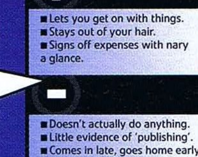
The good bits, the bad bits – all in a handy graph...

4 THE SCORE BAR

The verdict explained for you...



PROS AND CONS
Because we think it's important to provide you with balanced reviews, we'll sum up the game simply with plus and minus points.

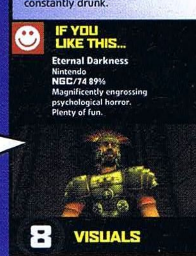


+
- Lets you get on with things.
- Stays out of your hair.
- Signs off expenses with nary a glance.

–
- Doesn't actually do anything.
- Little evidence of 'publishing'.
- Comes in late, goes home early, constantly drunk.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Not all games are good (unsurprisingly) – so you'll be wanting to know what the alternative is. We'll provide suggestions here.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Eternal Darkness
Nintendo
NGC/74 89%
Magnificently engrossing psychological horror. Plenty of fun.



VISUALS AND SOUNDS
Gamecube sends PS2 packing. Do the visuals and sounds show this?

MASTERY
How well does the game make use of the Cube's startling hardware?

LIFESPAN
Will it last you a lifetime or a couple of minutes? Here you'll find out for sure...

8 VISUALS
Always well turned-out, comfortable shoes, co-ordinated wardrobe, scarf.

5 SOUNDS
Mostly silent, apart from the occasional 'mmmm', and the rustle of a raised eyebrow.

5 MASTERY
Great at polishing off wine, otherwise doesn't really push the publishing envelope.

6 LIFESPAN
The lack of activities means you'll be retiring off Belgian slush-funds to do gardening.

VERDICT
We don't throw scores around – we give a game what it deserves. Here you will find the definitive verdict on whether you should purchase a game.

VERDICT
Stevens 2.0: Mmmm Time is an unusual title. Like real life, there's little aim to the game, and you're not really pressured into anything strenuous. It's, well, relaxing.

NGC 85



5 OUR SCORING SYSTEM

What those scores mean to you...

NGC STAR GAME

0-24	25-49	50-74	75-89	90+
Crushingly awful, massively dull. Rest assured, this is crud.	Disappointing, stashed with faults and likely to be short of any quality.	Some great bits, some not-so-great bits. Decent but definitely problems.	Great fun, brilliantly programmed at times, but probably flawed.	Rarely awarded, you'll know a 90+ is absolutely essential.

MEET THE NGC TEAM

Ah, *Resident Evil Zero*. It turned the **NGC** team into even more rotting, gribbly horrors.

Meat-moulding: Necromancer Bicksy



JES
Totalitarian overlord Bickham was pleased with his undead horde. "I love all my children" he said. "Though they stink."



JUD
What's more frightening than a gun-toting art editor? A gun-toting zombie, that's what. "Guuuns", he burbled.



MARTIN
Martin jumped with glee at the chance to slaughter zombies, until he became one himself. "Oh. Bugger," he said.



GERAINT
The Welsh love-whale bemoaned his deteriorating good looks. "The girls down the estate won't even look at me now".



DAN
Dan stopped jigging only when his rotten legs dropped off. "A terrible state of affairs, to be sure, begorrah, and so on."



PAUL
To be honest, we really didn't notice much difference with Paul.



AL
Jes's attempts to clone himself gave rise to this freakish undead horror. "Oh, really," said Al, "I'm obviously the superior model."



RICH
Ginger mullet-haired Rich comes from Wales, kith and kin to little Geraint. "Leeks, brains – what's the difference?" he said.



LAURA
*Art freelancer Laura was horrified at the undead vibe. "You f****** little c****, I'll kill you all", she whispered sweetly.*

"The clever bit is that you use both characters simultaneously"



△ What *Resi* game would be complete without zombie dogs? Only two here – but two's enough.



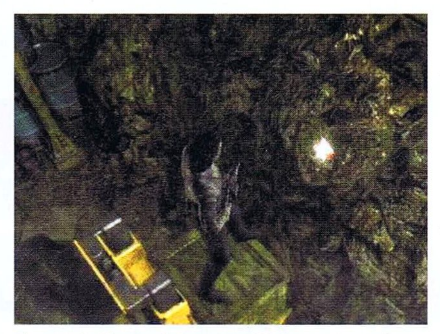
△ The Magnum: an ideal gift for the discerning gun enthusiast. Noisy *and* messy. Ace.



△ Billy and Bec-Becs head down the gasworks for a spot of hide and seek. There's a certain purposeful beauty to the character animation. It's all very 'natural'.



△ A forklift truck, eh? Why would we want to start it up? Perhaps...



△ ...aah. If one of the team climbs on the forks, there's an out-of-reach secret to be had.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	CAPCOM
PUBLISHER	NINTENDO
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	9
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Resi Zero will be shelf-present by the 7th March – the NTSC version's been out for a while, though.

COST: £40

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Trapped in a sealed environment with nothing but stupid zombies for company. But enough about Big Brother...



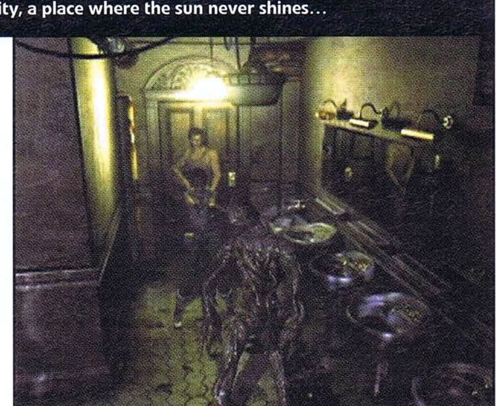
GET INTO THE GAME

Welcome to Raccoon City, a place where the sun never shines...

BRRRAINSSSSSS...

Resi veterans shouldn't bother with selecting the easy setting – start on medium or hard, and you'll find the action just right. Although hard is... well, pretty hard!

One of the most useful controls is the quick turnaround. Hold back on the stick, then tap run, and you'll do an immediate about-face. This is vital when the zombies are ganging up, and there are some very close environments where there's barely enough room to swing a T-virus-infected cat, let alone a 12-gauge.





Who can forget that moment in the original *Resident Evil* when you met your first zombie? Remember how he turned away from his cold, meaty man-snack to fix his fish-eyed gaze on fresher, more tender meat (you)? The low, throaty moan born in his rancid voice-box and clambering slowly up his diseased neck as he shambled towards you? The sense of revulsion you felt as you pumped round after round into his papery brain-case? The uneasy feeling afterwards that maybe he was just pretending to be, well, dead? *Brr-rr.* An historic moment to be sure, and an opening confrontation that led to a raft of sequels, many late nights, and no small measure of bed-wetting. *Cough.*

So, here we are now, with a prequel to the whole saga, for *Resident Evil Zero* occurs

Two's company, three's a bloodbath…



LOOKEE HERE

What are you staring at? Ah, a bed-bound mouldering corpse. Rebecca and Billy react to the environment around them, glancing at potential enemies, twitching bodies and collectable items.



SAVE ME

The old typewriters scattered around the locations are your save points. To save, you'll need an ink ribbon. The game's lenient on this front – there are plenty lying around.

THE LIGHT FANTASTIC

As you can see, the character models blend wonderfully into their environment, aided in no small part by the dynamic lighting. Finally, graphics have more or less reached the stage where models match pre-renders.



DEATH BED

This fellow looks well on the way to becoming zombified. Will he rise to attack when your backs are turned? Or simply lie there stinking the place up? You just don't know…

TEAM SPIRIT

Billy and Rebecca work best as a team, especially in firefights. There are even occasions when monsters simply won't appear if there are two characters. Alone, you're more likely to be picked off.

just before Jill and Chris' fateful first foray into the Umbrella mansion, long ago…

The two playable characters involved in the carnage this time around are Rebecca and Billy – the former being a young S.T.A.R.S. agent, proficient in chemistry and biology; the latter, a wet-ops – and murder – specialist on the run from the law. Both have clearly defined roles in the game. Rebecca, for instance, is the only character who can mix herbs together to create healing salves, and carries a miniature chemistry set around with her, which comes in very handy. Billy's more your hired-muscle type – he can take much more of a pounding than Rebecca when the munters shuffle up for a nibble, and he deals out a lot more damage than her with any given weapon, too.

PAIR SHAPED

So, rather than two characters who are equal in their abilities, which previous *Resi* games have presented us with, you've got a pair who each perform their own specific tasks, independently of the other. Now, the really clever bit (which you're no doubt fully aware of if you read our US import review of *Resident Evil Zero* a couple of months back) is that you use these characters simultaneously. None of this completing-the-game-with-one-character-then-doing-it-all-over-again-with-the-other foo-daddlery. You work through the game with both characters active nearly all the time. The only times you don't are when one or the other is unavoidably 'detained' to satisfy part of the script.

> **"BILLY CAN TAKE A BIT MORE OF A POUNDING WHEN THE MUNTERS SHUFFLE UP FOR A NIBBLE…"**

And yes, the system works wonderfully well – thanks mainly to the various control settings at your disposal. You can control one character directly, while the other follows you around, firing at anything that comes near. You can leave a character in one location while you head off with the other to perform tasks – very handy when one of them is low on life. You can even use the



DID YOU KNOW? A virus isn't a life-form in its own right. It's a little packet of genetic code that injects itself into a cell, and uses the cell's internal machinery to spawn more viruses.



HOW TO... HUNT LEECHES

Tired of the endless puzzles? Got those item-hunting blues? Then pull out the automatics. It's open season on T-virus muties.

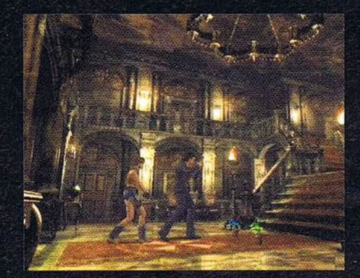
Resident Evil Zero is a decent-sized game, but as you come to the end, you begin to think about replay value. Can you really be arsed to go through the whole thing all over again? Will it simply sit on the shelf, gathering dust for a few months? The short answer is... no. Because one of the fantastic features of the game is that, upon completion, you unlock an entirely new game. This game is Leech Hunter.

The premise is simple. You begin with both characters in the mansion area of the game – basically the second of the four 'chapters'. All doors bar two are unlocked. For these you'll need to find a key. But otherwise, you get the run of the house.

The object is to collect the 100 leech tokens, which are scattered around the house. Rebecca needs 50 green ones, while Billy-boy must tease out 50 blue ones. No multi-part puzzles, no fannying about – you just have to get in there and grab 'em, as quick as you can.

The thing that makes it really fun, and a refreshing change from the pace of the game proper, is that nearly every room is packed to the pods with muties of one kind or another. There's oodles of ammo and weaponry scattered around, which you'll need to find if you're to defeat the bigger or more numerous creatures, but only limited healing items. Frankly, it's a blast. The real challenge is to manage your inventories in such a way that your characters are always carrying a weapon, and yet still have space to collect all the tokens – you can't drop them once you've picked them up. Ten tokens stack into a single inventory slot, and you only have six slots. So, after a bit of simple maths, by the time you get 41 leeches, you'll only have room for a pistol. Eep.

If you exit the mansion with both characters still alive, their tokens are totted up and exchanged for one of five bonus items, which you'll find in the full adventure the next time you play it. Needless to say, this gives you an incentive to play it through again – preferably on a trickier setting. Unlimited hunting rifle ammo? Ta muchly...



HOUSE OF PAIN

Welcome to the fun house! Step right up and grab yourself a tasty herb for the adventure ahead. Good for what ails you! Won't help if you get your head pecked off by a giant crow, no sir. But, y'know, handy.



MONKEY GUTS

Gibbering gibbons want your grey head-jelly as much as the next beast, so make sure you're packing as much as you can carry in the way of simian dissuasion devices. Them claws cut deep 'n' dirty. Oof.



SPIDER MANGLE

Giant spider blocking your way to leech token heaven? Simply head to the anteroom and collect the 18-eyelet Doc Martens. Soles guaranteed to withstand oil, fat, acid, spiky spinnerets and compound-eye gunk.



TOKEN EFFORT

This little fellow is a leech token. They're hidden in the damnedest spots, but keep your peepers peeled, and you can recognise them by their twinkle. The more you collect, the more careful you have to be with inventory space...



MAGNUM FORCE

Getting ganged up on is an occupational hazard in leech hunter. But even these chimpy chumps can't argue with a Magnum-packing S.T.A.R.S. agent. But they have a go. Maybe they think they're hard enough.

EYE FEAST!

As much as any other factor, the graphics really help to make this game.



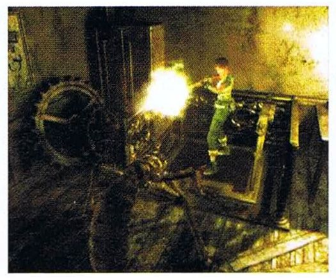
COLOUR OF SUNNY

Coloured lighting adds stacks to the atmosphere quotient, and gives a real sense of location. The warm glow of this lamplight is offset by the cold dank wall and stacked hospital bunks.



SHADOW SLAY

Light and shadow are key parts of the visual experience, and are affected by the movement of entities. You can imagine what it's like to see a shadow shuffling towards you around a blind corner.



MONSTER CLASS

The hideous creatures of Resident Evil Zero *are beautifully realised. These mutated mantises clatter chitinously against the floorboards as they come. Grim stuff, and wholly fitting.*



BOSSY SHOOT

The intermittent boss-beasties, such as this giant centipede, are nothing short of spectacular. Well, with one exception, perhaps – there's also a giant bat, which is a bit daft looking.



MODEL BEHAVIOUR

Here's a perfect example of just how much a part of the scenery the characters have become. It's hard to believe this is a three-dimensional model superimposed on a pre-rendered background.



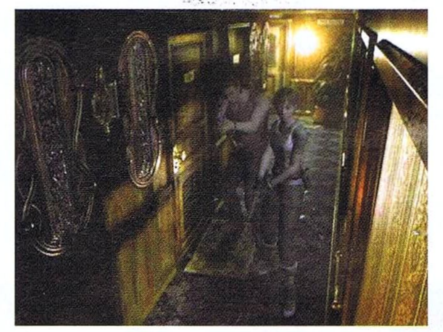
△ Billy and Bec's first meeting isn't exactly a friendly affair. He's a hot-tempered lad.



△ That timer's counting down to an imminent train-crash. Best find the brake levers.



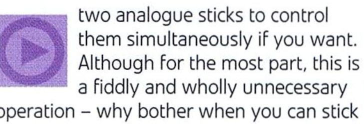
△ When frogs attack! Beware their long licky tongues, and their slimy surfaces. These amphibians might look daft, even quite cute, but believe us – they're quite deadly.



△ Billy and Rebecca hear a groan from somewhere off screen. Here be zombies.



△ "And where have you been, young lady? Out gallivanting with those wet-ops lads, I'll wager!"



two analogue sticks to control them simultaneously if you want. Although for the most part, this is a fiddly and wholly unnecessary operation – why bother when you can stick one or the other on automatic pilot? You'd need two independently functioning brain hemispheres to have any success with this method, anyway. But hey, nice idea.

The upshot of it all is that Billy and Rebecca mutually support each other. Combat takes on a new flavour when you've a buddy beside you doubling your firepower. By the same token, certain puzzles can only be completed with each character in a separate location, manipulating items in some way towards a common goal. By way of example, the final part of the first chapter, which is set on a speeding train, requires Billy and Rebecca to independently operate two sets of brakes – one in the driver's compartment and one at the very rear. With the simple press of a button, you can switch between your characters and get them to pull their respective levers.

And while we're on the subject of puzzles… well, let's just say that *Zero* is easily as puzzle-heavy as any other *Resi* game. And they're puzzles you'll be wholly familiar with as well. Collect item A, slide it into slot A, a secret door opens leading to another room where you find key B for a door you can't yet reach… you get the picture. It's nice that there's some familiarity, but for the most part, the puzzles just aren't as unique as we'd like. In fact, there are only two or three truly excellent conundrums in the game. These are of the logic

"COMBAT TAKES ON A NEW FLAVOUR WHEN YOU'VE A BUDDY BESIDE YOU DOUBLING YOUR FIREPOWER"



CUTS OF BEEF

The cut-scenes are pretty much the best we've ever seen. Not only are they incredibly slick, visually, but it seems that Capcom have finally accomplished the impossible, and created CG humans which move convincingly. Just wait until you see the final scene. John Woo would be bilious with envy.

"They explode when they die, showering you with acidic leech-pus"

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

So who's the bloke in the white dress? Dark forces are awaiting your every move…

WHITHER WESKER?

Old Resi veterans will recognise loco mofo Wesker. This man has eyes everywhere – a camera on every wall, it seems, as you see him watching your progress at several key points. His involvement in the T-virus programme is definitely not above board.

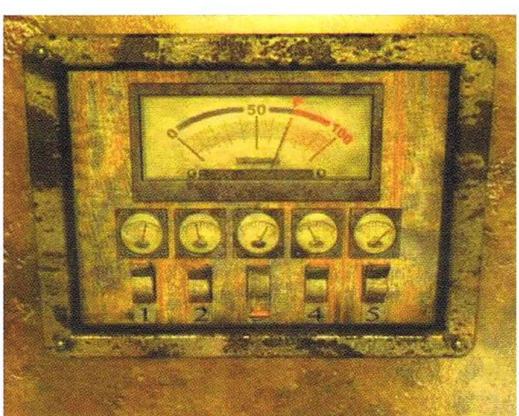
BLACK OPS

It seems other covert forces are at work, too. These bio-suited chaps are most definitely not your friends. They've clearly been sent in to clean up the mess, as S.T.A.R.S is, apparently, not up to the task. In fact, you'll see some zombies on the train sporting S.T.A.R.S. body armour…

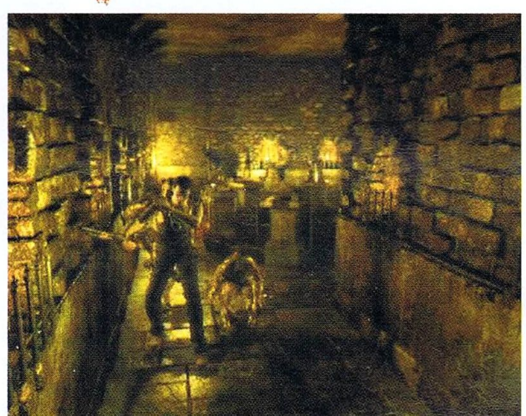


BEST FIN SHOW

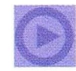
Without a shadow of a doubt, the best bit of the game is the final showdown, along with its accompanying rendered cut-scene. It's a spectacular end to the game, a challenging battle which you'll probably have to attempt several times, and the cut-scene sets things up a treat for the next game in the series – Resident Evil. We don't want to give the game away, though, so we'll leave it there!



One of the better puzzles, this. You need to regulate the power on this generator using a combination of switches.



'Get this blasted monkey off my back…' Billy fends off an over-enthusiastic chimp.



variety, and require some real brainwork to complete. However, these gems punctuate the standard-issue keys-and-doors monotony but rarely.

LOGIC BE DAMNED

In between, there are many brief-but-frantic bursts of combat. There's a cracking selection of T-virus mutants including, of course, our old pals the zombies. The facility that Billy and Rebecca happen upon is the site of the original T-virus experiments, and there are plenty of twisted experiments stalking the crumbling corridors. Screeching, hairless baboons; giant chittering mantises; oversized bats… you even get to meet Nemesis (of *Resident Evil 3: Nemesis* fame) on a couple of occasions. Dominating this twisted menagerie of horrors is the humble leech, the original test subject into which the T-virus was introduced back in the 1970s. These gribbly little buggers flock together to form ropey, bipedal hulks with whip-like tentacle arms – probably the toughest critters in the game. They can kill you with a few blows, and explode when they die, showering you with acidic leech-pus. Deadly, and wholly unpleasant.

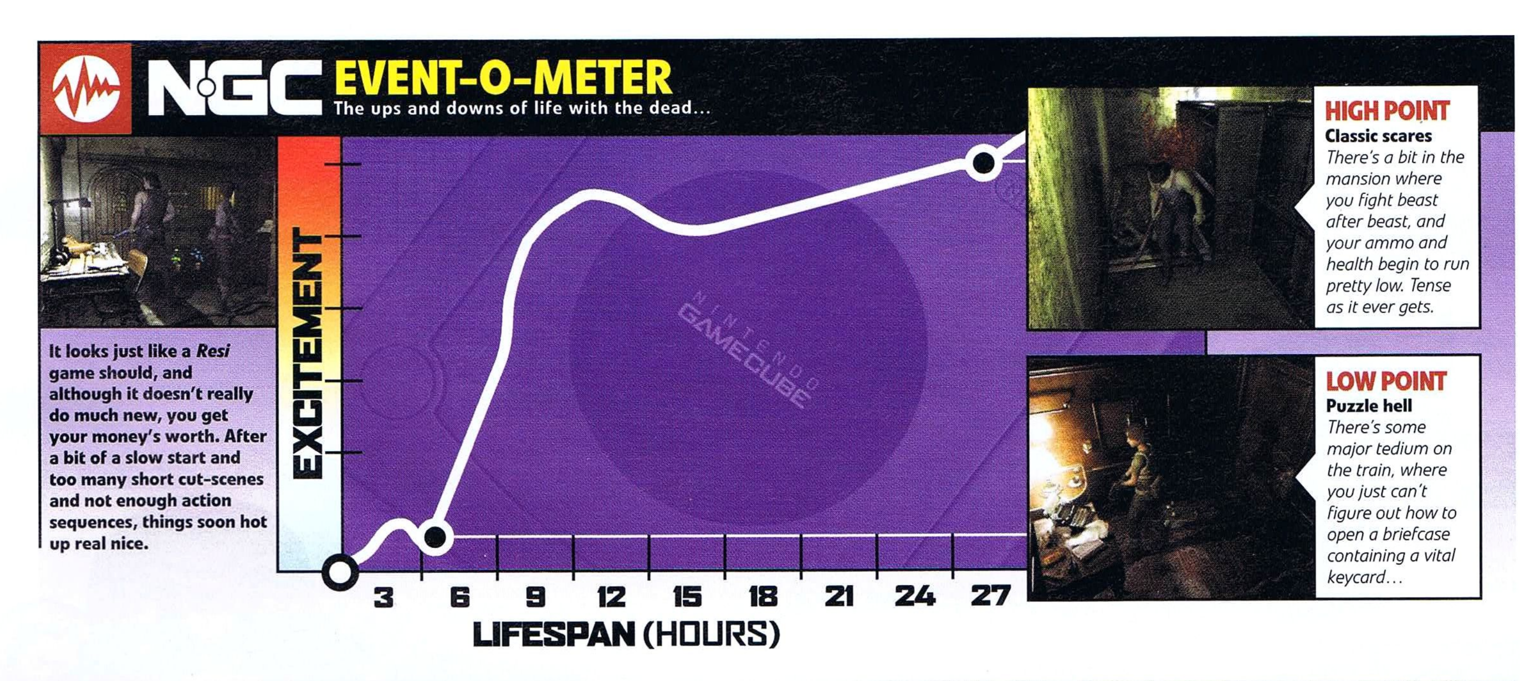
DROP ZONE

One major change in gameplay mechanics is the fact that there are no longer any teleportation chests in which to stow the gear that you can't lug around with you, and have it magically reappear in the other

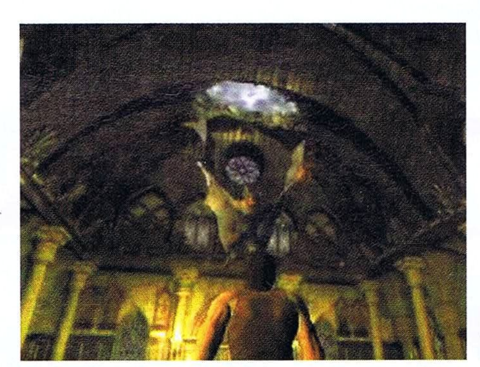


STANDARD ISSUE

There are few surprises in the weapons department. You'll have seen them all before in previous Resi games, which is a bit of a shame. The two notable additions, however, are the pistol scope, which increases damage and rate of fire, and the Molotov cocktail.







Fear the mighty… BAT! Hear it squeak! "Chrrrp!"



When the leeches gang up, they form hard-as-nails creatures. Beware.

chests you find. Instead, you can casually leave items strewn around anywhere you please. This new feature is both a blessing and a curse, however. On the one hand, you've got the ability to drop items in order to pick up others – which can be very handy when you're desperately low on health and you need that vital first-aid spray. On the other, it means that you end up pottering back and forth through the levels, hunting for vital items you've been forced to leave behind. On balance, this actually creates even more mindless busy-work than ever before – something that, frankly, the *Resi* games have never been shy of. It can be a real pain in the jacksie.

> **"IT'S VERY DIFFICULT TO DISLIKE RESIDENT EVIL ZERO, BUT AT THE SAME TIME, IT'S HARD TO LOVE IT"**

It's very difficult to dislike *Resident Evil Zero*, but at the same time, it's also hard to love it. The game falls foul of the same bloopers as its predecessors; namely, that every door-opening sequence is a tedious waste of time, and when your progress grinds to a halt, there's too much running around searching for that single, vital item. These are last-generation issues that should've been eradicated by now. But on the plus side, *Zero* adds truckloads of rich material to the *Resident Evil* mythos, and at times, it's an absolute joy to play. The versatility of having two characters can help you get out of some very sticky situations, and there's a simple but undeniable pleasure in using Billy and Rebecca as a team. Fans of the series will find little to surprise them here, but neither will they be wholly disappointed. And as for newcomers… well, we can only heartily recommend it as an excellent introduction to the survival horror genre.

AL BICKHAM



COVER ME!

When you stick your buddy on autopilot, he or she will fire at any critter in their line of sight. However, they don't fire as rapidly as you do, which means they never quite do as much damage. For this reason, it's a good idea to kit them out with a powerful weapon, such as the Magnum.



- Fantastic visuals
- The best cut-scenes. Ever.
- Perfectly Resi.



- Clunky PSX mechanics
- Bring back the chests!
- Tedious door-opening sequences. Still.



IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Resident Evil
Capcom
NGC/72 89%
The update of the original – zombie nostalgia in 128 bits…



9 VISUALS
Beautiful animated backgrounds and wonderful models.

8 SOUNDS
Atmospheric splats and groans, and good music where it counts.

7 MASTERY
The looks are ace, but the mechanics push no boundaries.

7 LIFESPAN
An unlockable sub-game (see the 'Leech Hunter' page) helps.

VERDICT

Still suffering from the same age-old *Resident Evil* issues, but it's taxing, atmospheric and entertaining. A worthy purchase.

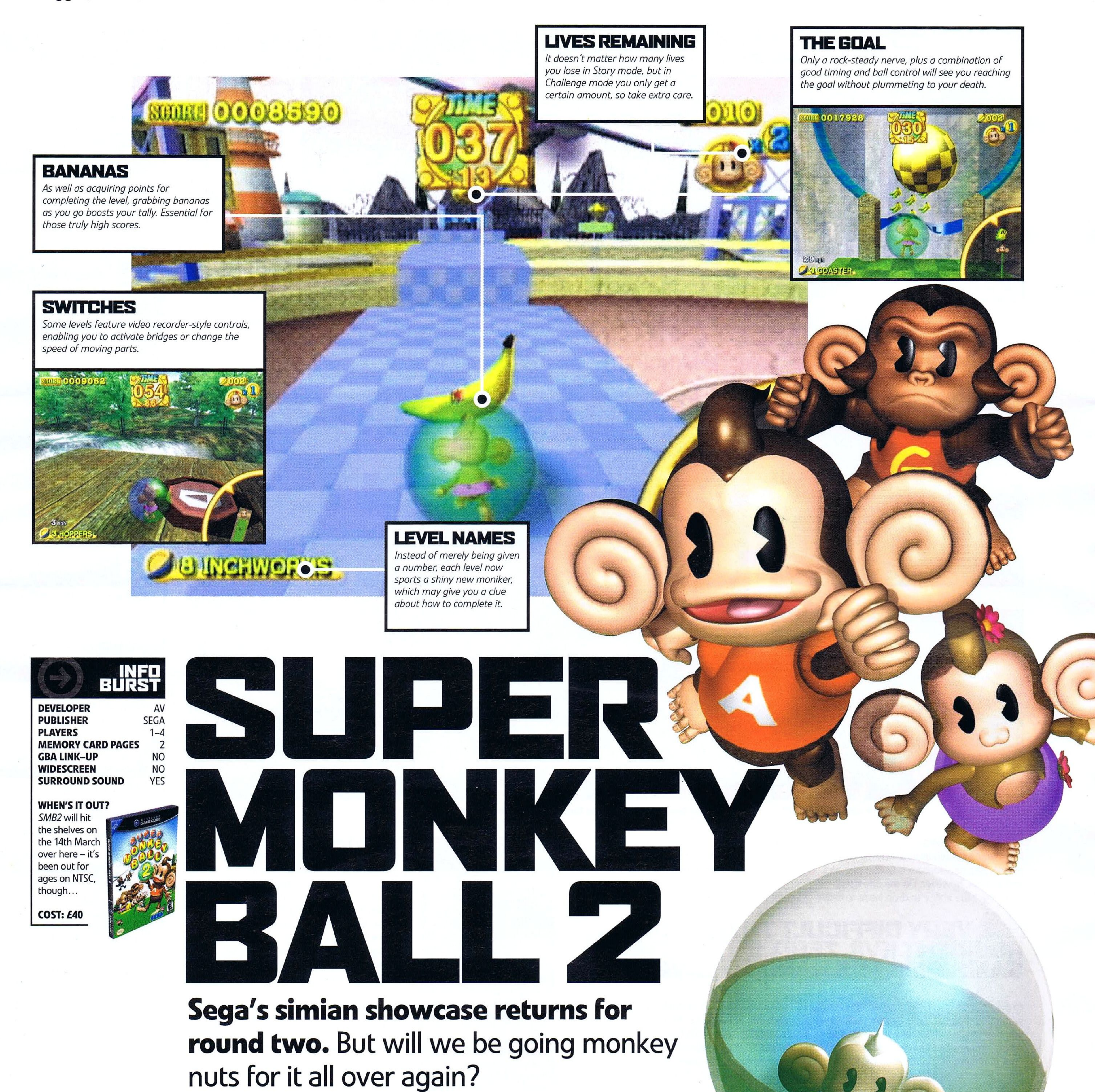






DID KNOW? There's an official Church of the Virus. According to them, it's a "rational, atheistic religion, memetically engineered to fill an ecological niche in the idea-space of humanity created by recent advances in knowledge." Hmm.

"'Bigger, better, more' seems to have been the mantra here"



LIVES REMAINING

It doesn't matter how many lives you lose in Story mode, but in Challenge mode you only get a certain amount, so take extra care.

THE GOAL

Only a rock-steady nerve, plus a combination of good timing and ball control will see you reaching the goal without plummeting to your death.

BANANAS

As well as acquiring points for completing the level, grabbing bananas as you go boosts your tally. Essential for those truly high scores.

SWITCHES

Some levels feature video recorder-style controls, enabling you to activate bridges or change the speed of moving parts.

LEVEL NAMES

Instead of merely being given a number, each level now sports a shiny new moniker, which may give you a clue about how to complete it.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	AV
PUBLISHER	SEGA
PLAYERS	1–4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
SMB2 will hit the shelves on the 14th March over here – it's been out for ages on NTSC, though…

COST: £40

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

Sega's simian showcase returns for round two. But will we be going monkey nuts for it all over again?

SUPER MONKEY BALL 2

Spheroidal simians are go for the second banana-collecting roll-fest!

△ This watery hell is one of the first truly annoying levels you'll come across in the game.


△ Plenty of luck is the key to this one.



△ Apes can't be evil… or can they?



△ With beefed-up power-ups and loads more competitors, Monkey Race is even more hectic than ever.

THE ORIGINAL PARTYGOERS RETURN

Revamped, repackaged, and available from the word go…



MONKEY FIGHT

Go ape with this mini beat-'em-up all over again. With two new rings, new power-ups and a sudden-death mode, Monkey Fight is better than ever.



MONKEY BILLIARDS

Not only does it sport a new western theme, but also four different types of play. Not a huge improvement on the original, but slightly better nonetheless.



MONKEY BOWLING

Almost identical to the original, except Monkey Ball's bowling alley now features a Special mode complete with ker-ayzee undulating lanes.



MONKEY GOLF

Definitely the most improved Party Game. With a full eighteen holes plus a pretty sophisticated shot system, this plays almost as well as Mario Golf.



MONKEY RACE

With more interesting tracks, additional power-ups and now supporting up to seven CPU-controlled racers, Monkey Race is more manic than ever. Ace.



GET INTO THE GAME

More monkey modes than you'll ever need – but where to begin?

CHALLENGE MODE

There's no messing around with plot lines here – just get straight into that chequerboard monkey-rolling straight away in challenge mode. Ahhh, that's better…

PARTY GAMES

All six from the original, updated and ready to go right from the off. The only problem is deciding which one to get stuck into first. We've make it easy for you though – Monkey Target is the one. Yes it is.





Instantly appealing (monkeys in balls? Genius!), incredibly simple and mind-bendingly addictive, last year's simian symphony was among the finest titles in that first wave of Gamecube games. A combination of a seemingly simple single-player game that soon spiralled up to mind-crushingly difficult levels (Master Level 3, anyone? Aaarrrgh!), plus an astounding array of superb multiplayer games made *Super Monkey Ball* a must-have in any self-respecting games collection.

But with less than a year having passed since they first appeared on the scene, Aiai, Meemee, Baby and Gongon are back once more, hoping to both delight and frustrate us in equal measure all over again. Matching (or even bettering) the dizzy heights of last year's success will be no mean feat; can they really do it all over again?

Developers AV have gone for a simple strategy for their second *Monkey Ball* outing, as 'bigger, better, more' seems to have been the mantra here. Virtually every component from the original game has been stripped down and undergone an rigorous overhaul, before being returned here along with a banana-boat-load of brand new extras. The main single-player game is now available to play in either of two ways: Challenge and Story. Operating in an identical manner to the original, Challenge mode lets players pick one of three challenge paths (Easy, Intermediate and Advanced) and see if they can complete their chosen task before running out of a finite number of lives and continues. Each new attempt kicks off back at the beginning of the challenge, so


DID YOU KNOW? In 1958 the US Army launched a squirrel monkey called Gordo into orbit to research manned space flights. Sadly the module malfunctioned, so they had to leave him up there. Sob…

"Levels range from the incredibly simple to the downright fiendish"

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

Aargh! What have they done to Monkey Target? Take it easy – all will be revealed…

IT'S ALL GONE BANANAS

These days the skies in Monkey Target are teeming with bunches of sweet, sweet bananas. You get ten points for each one you nab, and more of the trails will lead you straight to the target. Getting more than one line of them is far from easy and will definitely test you piloting skills.

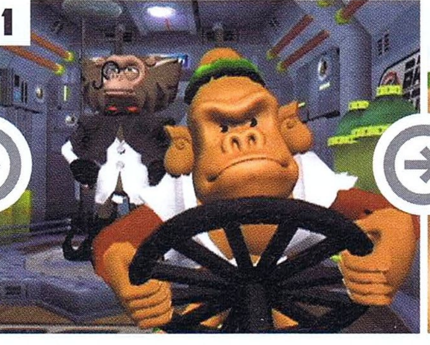
POWERED-UP

Grabbing bananas no longer affects which power-ups you are eligible for – now you just have to grab them out of the air. Brake icons do just that, and slow you down upon landing; stars add one to your landing score multiplier; while magnets ensure you stop dead once you hit the target.

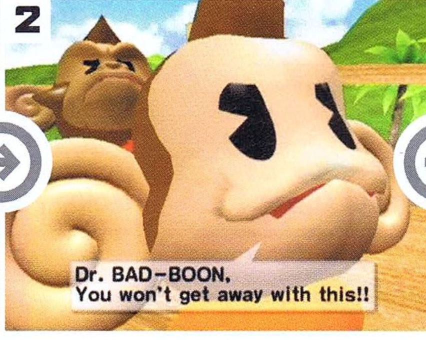
BAD TO THE BOON

If you always wondered what twisted scenario could have sealed four happy monkeys inside giant plastic balls, then wonder no more. Story mode reveals all as it weaves its tangled tale of banana theft, jealously, magic and unrequited love. Dr Bad-boon appears on Monkey Island asking for Meemee's hand in marriage – when she refuses, the no-good ape steals all the bananas from the island, leaving its inhabitants to starve. Time for some serious monkey magic…

1



2



3



completing the Intermediate and Advanced levels is far from easy.

And as well as introducing a terrible tale of banana theft and dividing the levels into ten differently themed worlds, the all-new Story mode also makes life a lot easier by allowing players as many stabs at a particular level as they like and giving them the ability to save from any point. The game's 100 levels are shared between the two modes, with a few cosmetic changes being the only real difference.

THE APES OF FAFF

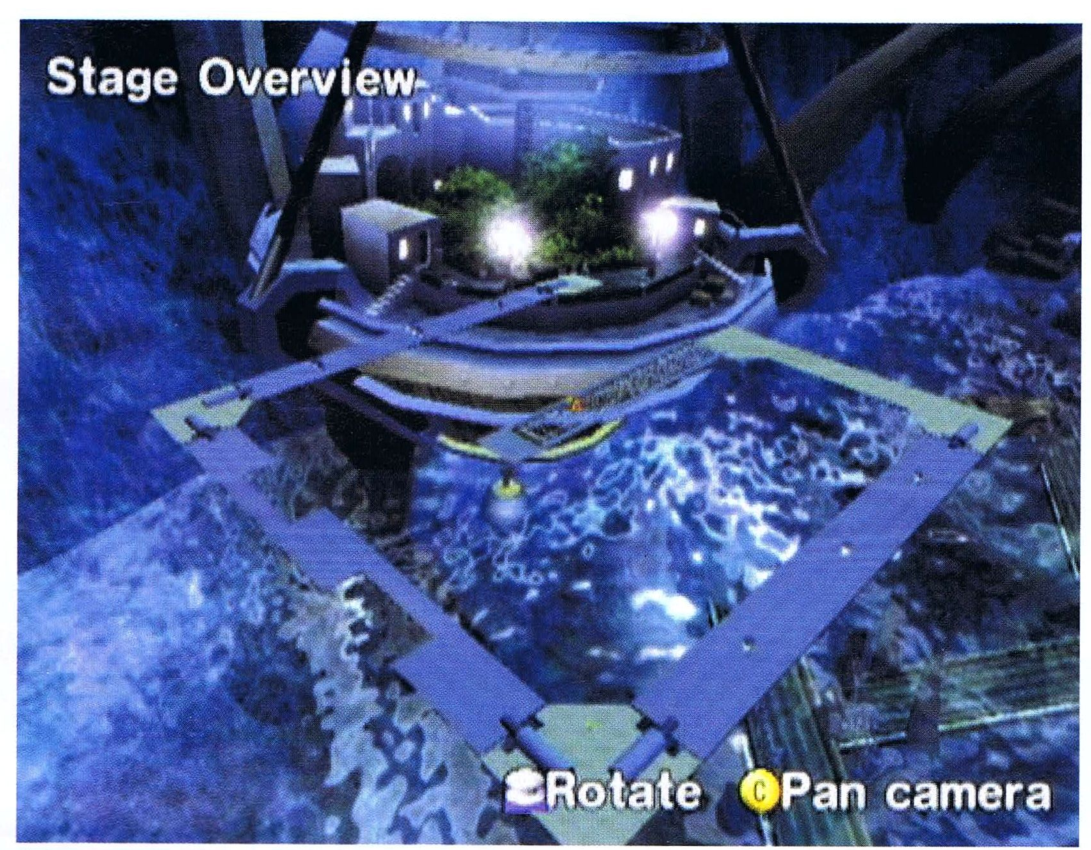
Even more so than in the original game, the levels themselves range from the incredibly simple to the downright fiendish. While most rely on a combination of ball-manoeuvring skill and timing, this time around there are also far too many that rely more heavily on blind luck. The skill involved with levels such as Launchers, Serial Jump and Air Hockey is minimal, as they all involve far too many random elements and lucky bounces to be made anything but infuriatingly difficult to play. Levels such as these (and many others) could have been made less frustrating if the game camera could be adjusted with the C-stick if necessary. But here (just like in the original) your viewpoint remains fixed firmly behind you, only shifting to the left or the right when you're on the move.

Leaving the single-player frustrations aside for a minute, *Super Monkey Ball*'s finest hour was always its multiplayer games, and fortunately that's still the case. Every one of the six original party games returns here and is available to play right from the kick-off. And as you'd expect, each has been revamped and updated for this sequel. Monkey Race now features a host of brand new high-speed courses, additional power-ups and up to seven computer-controlled racers at once, making it feel like a serious marathon event than the previous seven-yard dash. Monkey Fight has also gained a few more power-ups, new levels and a sudden-death mode, where the ring gradually crumbles away just like *Mario 64*'s

> **"THIS TIME AROUND, THERE ARE FAR TOO MANY LEVELS THAT RELY TOO HEAVILY ON BLIND LUCK"**



MONKEY JOKES! Why did the monkey fall out of the tree? Because it was dead. Why did the second monkey fall out of the tree? It was tied to the first monkey. What's yellow and smells of bananas? Monkey puke. Why did… *(cease – Ed.)*



△ You can now study each level in depth – essential for working out strategies on the more complex levels.



△ The floor gets nibbled away to give fights an extra edge.



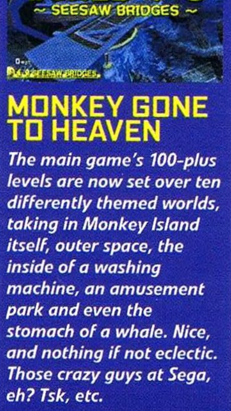
△ Hard men show their sensitive side by playing as Meemee.

Bowser stage. Monkey Bowling can now be played using regular lanes, or ones with ramps, bowls and undulating wave-forms running down them. Monkey Billiards now gets a Wild West-style setting, and can be played with all sorts of different rules to satisfy pool-table obsessives. Monkey Golf has been transformed from the kind of sand-blown, crazy-golf scenario that you'd find in Rhyl or Weston-Super-Mare, to a full-blown eighteen hole golf sim complete with match or skins play options.

TOP CHIMPS

While the changes made to each one of the Party games are significant improvements upon the originals, the biggest (and most controversial) changes have affected what was by far the office favourite of all party games – Monkey Target. Pure flight addicts will be dismayed to see the air is now filled with vulgar power-ups, but despite the sheer number of them, the points gained from grabbing bananas are still secondary to the ones scored for your landing skills. The biggest alteration to the game however, allows it to be played as a four-player split-screen affair. Stealing power-ups from the clutches of your opponents and using kamikaze tactics to smash them out of the air not only makes Monkey Target far more exciting, but also renders any arguments over whether the other changes have enhanced or ruined the game completely redundant. Monkey Target is far more fun as a spilt-screen multiplayer – end of story.

While each of the original Party Games come back in even better form than before, the six brand new ones are a pretty mixed bag. At the top of the tree sits Monkey Tennis. While it's not quite up there with *Mario Tennis*, it still



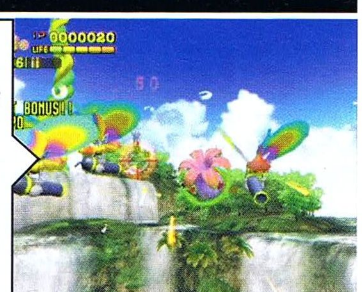
MONKEY GONE TO HEAVEN

The main game's 100-plus levels are now set over ten differently themed worlds, taking in Monkey Island itself, outer space, the inside of a washing machine, an amusement park and even the stomach of a whale. Nice, and nothing if not eclectic. Those crazy guys at Sega, eh? Tsk, etc.

A MIXED BAG OF NUTS

We save you 15,000 play points and reveal every new game…

MONKEY SHOT



Simplistic, uninspiring and very, very dull, this incredibly basic shoot-'em-up is definitely the weakest new Party Game. You can just about glean a fingerful of enjoyment in four-player mode, but that's about as good as it gets. Save your valuable play points for something else and unlock this lifeless waste of space only once you've opened up all the others.

MONKEY DOGFIGHT

This free-flying shooter sets you flying about in a ball-shaped glider, that's been beefed up with a cannon and missile launchers. The aim is simple – blast everyone else out of the air, before they blast you. Reasonable fun in single-player, but comes into its own as a frenzied four-player frag-fest. Not the finest, but a solid addition to the gaming party.

MONKEY SOCCER



Despite playing like My First Footie Game, Monkey Soccer is far more fun than it may sound. Devoid of tackles, fouls, or being able to kick the ball out of play, this definitely isn't going to be giving ISS any sleepless nights. But despite being stripped down to the bare essentials, it's still remarkably good fun. Even football-hater Jes can gets a few kicks out of this one.

MONKEY BASEBALL




Aside from hitting a ball-shaped object with a some kind of stick, baseball in the Monkey Ball universe has very little to do with the game as we know it. To score points simply hit the ball at one of the ramps scattered around the pitch. There's no need for fielding or running around bases, and pitching just involves pressing the A-button. All in all, another big disappointment.

MONKEY TENNIS

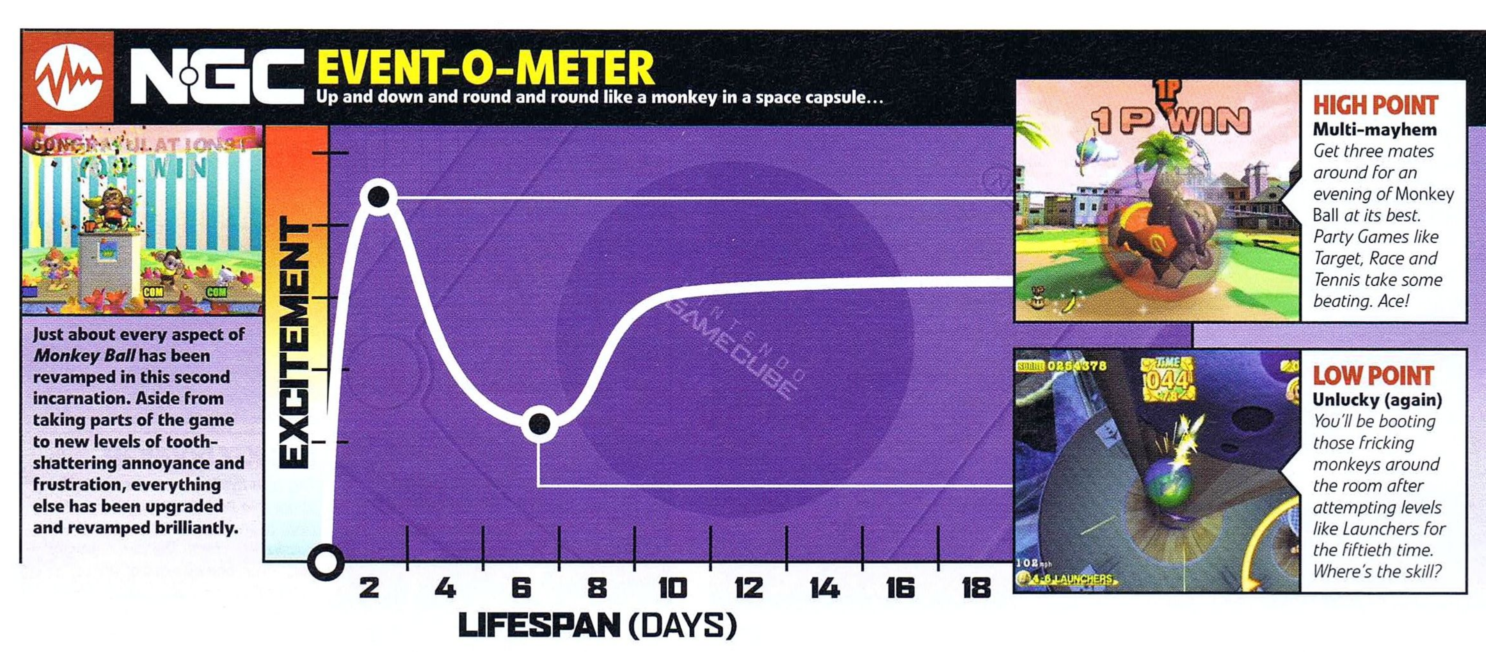


While its not quite up there with the likes of Mario Tennis, this game of bat and ball is the finest yet to appear on the Cube. Plays a great game of singles against the computer, but comes into its own with four-player doubles. With a range of shots, several different courts, plus being able to play as a monkey, this one will keep you going for an age.

MONKEY BOAT

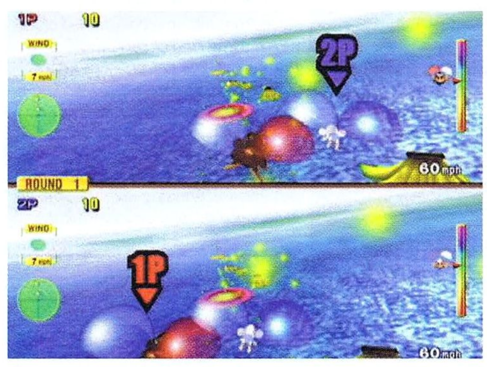
Racing downstream, avoiding rocks and attacks from your rivals may sound fun, but a really naff control system makes Monkey Boat stupidly frustrating. Playing like the ancient coin-op Track and Field, the direction and speed of your craft is controlled by hammering the shoulder-buttons on your pad. Doing this effectively is insanely hard and no fun at all. Bah!

"The six brand new games are a pretty mixed bag"



Just about every aspect of *Monkey Ball* has been revamped in this second incarnation. Aside from taking parts of the game to new levels of tooth-shattering annoyance and frustration, everything else has been upgraded and revamped brilliantly.





Split-screen makes Target even better than before.



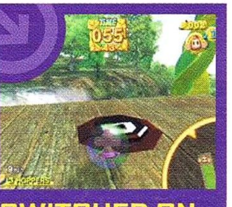
Tough and frustrating this level may be, but crucially it remains highly enjoyable by relying completely upon skill.



plays a pretty mean and sophisticated game, with spin and lob shots as well as regular returns. Next in the pecking order is Monkey Soccer, which despite playing like My First Football Game is still extremely hectic and a lot of fun. Monkey Dogfight is another lunchtime favourite, playing like a dumbed-down version of *Lylat Wars*. Sadly, Monkey Boat, Shot and Baseball all fail to live up to the standards of the other games and won't get much play once the novelty of unlocking them wears off.

Just like the original, this is a game that has something that will delight just about everyone. However, for every aspect of the game that's worth getting excited about, there's almost always something else equally disappointing. And to be perfectly honest (despite the new Party Games), *Super Monkey Ball 2* hasn't really moved on from the original at all. Some new single-player modes would have been nice, perhaps something akin to *Marble Madness*, or maybe some on-screen enemies – who knows? But despite being fundamentally the same game, the disappointing new Party Games, the random nature of its levels, and the flawed camera, we've still really enjoyed getting stuck into *Super Monkey Ball 2*. It's not quite as solid a package as the original, but the refinements and additions still add up to a worthy game that's guaranteed to ensure the good times still roll.

RICH OWEN



SWITCHED ON

The chances are if you're dropped on to a fast-forward switch at the star, there'll be other switches around that will slow or even stop certain moving parts. Some levels feature whole banks of switches that must be manipulated correctly in order to complete them.



- 100-plus levels.
- Six new Party Games.
- Quirky Story mode.
- Master modes.



- Crap camera.
- Some levels rely purely on luck.
- No new monkeys!



IF YOU LIKE THIS…

Super Monkey Ball
Sega
NGC/67 88%
Not as much content, but a more well-rounded package.



7 VISUALS
Simple chequerboard levels, plus reasonably pretty backgrounds.

6 SOUNDS
Nice effects, but the relentless music gets even more grating.

7 MASTERY
Doesn't exactly push the Cube to its limits, but it's still solid stuff.

8 LIFESPAN
Will keep you going for ages. Loads of extra modes to unlock, too.



VERDICT

A huge game that really does contain something to please everyone. Conversely, it's unlikely anyone will enjoy all of it…



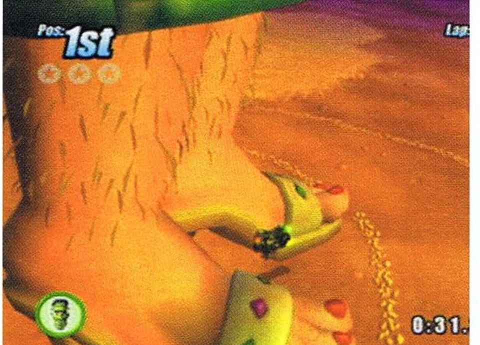




△ You can use weapons either at the front or back. Generally, it's the front-firing weapons that work best.



△ Transform! Turn from car to bike…



△ Yack! Hairy legs on the hick-filled Hoedown level.



△ A lonely first place as you speed off into the sunset.

△ Oooh! It's getting interesting as, after an easily-avoided error, you gradually claw back first place.

△ Exciting stuff, eh? This is one of the rare times where all four of you will be competing properly.

MICRO MACHINES



DEVELOPER	CODEMASTERS
PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
The *Machines* will be out in the shops now if you fancy a go. If you don't, ignore what we said.



COST: £40

Small faces! The teeniest racing game ever invented is back for another go. But! This time it's… er, the same.



As we're sure Codemasters are keen to point out, it's always been about 'the gameplay' with *Micro Machines*. After all, what other explanation can there be for this, a game that looks about five years too late and plays exactly the same as it did when it arrived on the SNES.

Sure, *Micro Machines* in its new Cube form is *fun*, but it's never surprising and, more crucially, never really very exciting. As you work your way through the game's Championship mode, it all too quickly dawns on you that the game offers virtually *no challenge at all*. The track design – even on the supposedly more difficult courses – is simplistic and predictable, going where you expect it to go and never going where you don't. Worse, the weapons – rockets, speed-ups, magnets, flamethrowers, frying pans – become almost entirely redundant, as you streak ahead in races, never to see the other three competitors again. At points, we found ourselves slowing to a halt just to inject a bit of excitement into the game. It's *that* bad.

GONE OFF TRACK

Characters are instantly forgettable – space girl Magenta, smooth operator Miami Mike and grandma Aunt Betty are the sort of thing on offer – but, interestingly, there is a definite difference in the feel of their default vehicles, which offers something extra. Trouble is, when you reach a transformation marker – one of the electrically charged stations that turn your car into a bike or boat in anticipation of an upcoming body of water – everything becomes the same again, taking away the reason you knew you were playing with a different character in the first place. The other thing is that, while the point of the boat is obvious, the point of the motorbike is less so. When you swap to two wheels, the track just carries on as normal – no thin ledges, no spaces only motorbikes can get through – making the change seem largely pointless. It also slows the game up as the bike's a real chugger.

It's not all bad, of course: a good premise is still a good premise and, in short bursts, *Micro Machines* is still an enjoyable enough experience. But enjoyable *enough* isn't really a reason to fork out £40. Disappointin' stuff.

TIM WEAVER



- Smooth and solid.
- Pretty in places.
- Bomb Tag is a decent multiplayer game.



- Old and predictable.
- Far, far too easy.
- Weapons quickly become pointless.

IF YOU LIKE THIS…
Mario Kart 64
Nintendo
NGC/4 91%
You'd have to say: *still* the best racing game ever made.





6 VISUALS
Nice, but reminiscent of older versions of the game on older machines.



6 SOUNDS
An assortment of level-specific tunes and minimal sound effects.



4 MASTERY
Hardly shakes up the technology. Looking the same as it always did.

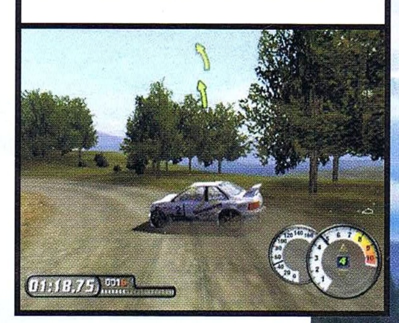
4 LIFESPAN
So easy you'll probably see it off in a day. Thank Fred for the multiplayer.

VERDICT
It works – most of the time, pretty well – but it's also familiar and unexciting, as well as unforgivingly short. Time for a rethink.



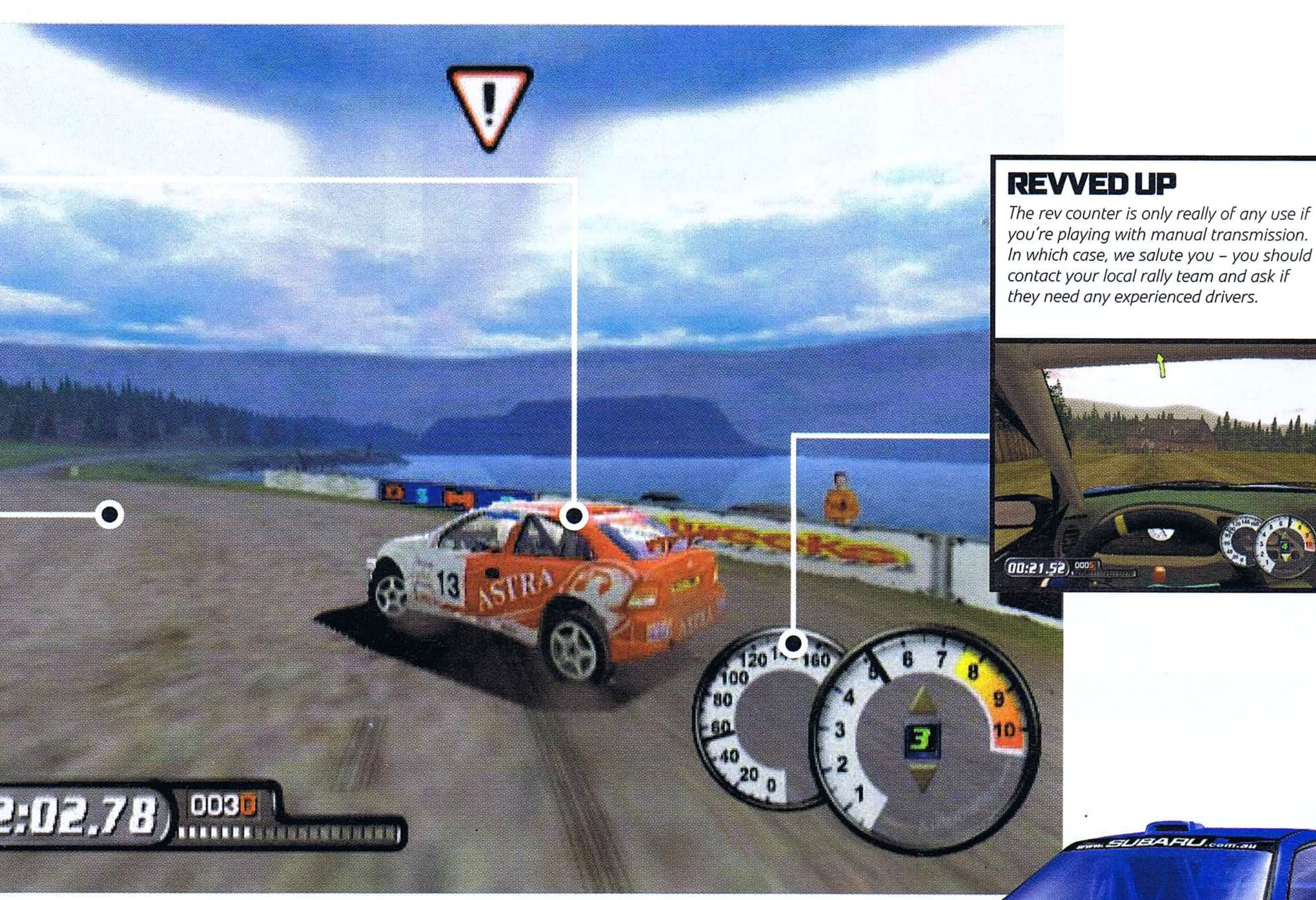


SLIPPEDY SLIDE
Yank the handbrake (well, tap the button), and your car goes sideways around the sharpest of corners. Satisfaction guaranteed.



CHECKPOINTS
Markers at regular intervals along the track refresh the timer in Arcade mode, or show your current ranking in Career mode.





REVVED UP
The rev counter is only really of any use if you're playing with manual transmission. In which case, we salute you – you should contact your local rally team and ask if they need any experienced drivers.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	WARTHOG
PUBLISHER	SCI
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	6
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
It'll be in the shops around March-ish time, at a tenner cheaper than most other games.



COST: £30



RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Think your handbrake is for parking? Try pulling it at 90mph and see what happens…

Although we're not exactly overrun with rally sims on the Gamecube, it's such a highly specialised genre, only a handful of high-budget titles are usually worth playing.

So it came as a bit of a surprise to find that SCi's *Rally Championship* is the best rally sim available for Gamecube right now. Granted, there's virtually no competition, what with the cancellation of *Rally Fusion*, the non-appearance of *Colin McRae GC*, and the averageness of Ubi Soft's *Pro Rally 2002*, but it's a decent achievement for a title from which we expected very little.

Naturally, it's the usual sort of rally business. After so many attempts there's really nothing out of the ordinary left to bring to this kind of thing, and as a classic videogame standard, it's all about how well the traditional elements are implemented.

The most important part is how the cars handle, which is where *Rally Championship* scores some points for user-friendliness. The arcade-style controls make even the more powerful cars a relative breeze to control compared to some of the more hardcore rally sims, and it's obvious the developers have balanced the gameplay towards fun rather than realism.

Of course, this means the car customisation options have a less noticeable effect than you might expect, and if you were hoping for a big change in performance when selecting new tyre compounds or tweaking gear differentials, you might be disappointed. If you'd rather just skip the setup screen and get on with some racing, you can do so without ruining your chance of a fast time.

"ARCADE-STYLE CONTROLS MAKE EVEN THE MORE POWERFUL CARS A RELATIVE BREEZE TO CONTROL"



FOUR PLAYERS
Race laps around eight specially designed four-player courses. There's a bit of slowdown from time to time, but nothing too bad. The graphical detail on the cars gets toned down quite a bit, to help keep everything moving at a respectable pace. You can choose crap cars versus good ones, too.



This being a Vauxhall Astra, there's probably an old man who smells of biscuits and wee in the driver's seat.

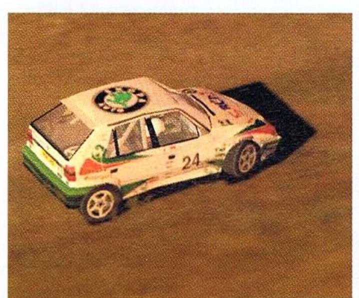


Pray your insurance is fully paid up.


Dust and rubble get churned up by the tyres.

PRIVATE LIFE

Why work for The Man when you can be a privateer, and do it all yourself?



BUY A CAR
You get 25 grand (a 'howler monkey' in cockney speak) to start. Enough for a Skoda.



ENTER A RACE
You'd better start winning some races if you want an upgrade. Prize money is great.



SAVE THE CASH
Luckily, you don't have to pay for the many repairs your car will need after each race.



BUY SOMETHING NICER
Have patience. It takes forever to earn the hundreds of monkeys needed for a top car.

The courses are quite variable in quality. Many of the early ones are little more than sedate drives through the country, without too many difficult corners or roadside hazards. After that, the game starts throwing in the odd monster of a track. One particularly evil stage, set around a misty Welsh dockland, begins with a race through a maze of crates. The co-driver's directions aren't always as clear as they could be, and we had to restart several times before finding the way out through all those tricksy 90-degree blind corners.

DAMAGE GOOD

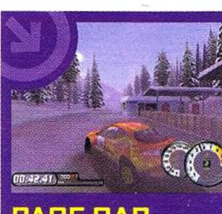
While the graphics won't strike anyone as being anything out of the ordinary on Gamecube, they do the job competently enough. The game has a crisp, PC-ish look to it, and the cars have plenty of detail. Best of all, an accurate damage system means that if you clip a bit of scenery, the car will be crunched at the precise point of impact rather than just going through generic stages of knackeredness. It's possible to smash individual lights, dent the roof, knock the trim off the back window, or turn a chunky muscle car into a cute compact via repeated front-end collisions.

The game is divided into Arcade and Career modes. Arcade features checkpoints to race between, just like *Out Run* or *Pole Position*, while Career mode adds a little more gameplay depth to the same set of tracks by awarding money for getting high placings in races. With over 30 cars available to purchase, and not a great deal of cash dished out for anything other than first position, it will certainly take a concerted effort to finish the entire thing.

Finally, there's a four-player mode. We've never been entirely convinced of the merit of this sort of thing if you can't fire off a red shell or shrink your competitors down to squashable proportions. After all, if one player owns the game, he's likely to be miles faster than his mates, and they'll have no chance of ever catching him. Which isn't fun. But still, the option is there if you want it.

Colin McRae might keep us waiting forever on Gamecube. If it's rally action you're after, and you don't own a PS2, take a close look at this one.

MARTIN KITTS



PACE CAR

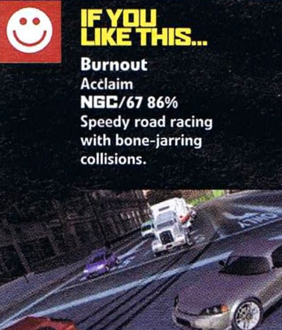
We were expecting an actual pace car to race against in this mode, but it's just the ghost of your previous performance. It would have been good if you could specify a target time, then test yourself against a computer car driving at that exact pace. Maybe in a future rally sim, perhaps.



■ Fast, decent graphics.
■ Slides nicely.
■ Multiplayer mode.
■ Reasonably priced.

■ Some of the early tracks are a little short on challenges.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Burnout
Acclaim
NGC/67 86%
Speedy road racing with bone-jarring collisions.



7 VISUALS
Crisp and PC-like, with detailed cars that get nicely smashed up.

6 SOUNDS
You'll probably want to turn down the in-game music and play a CD.

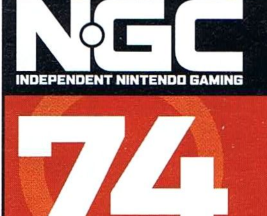
7 MASTERY
Competent physics, and a feeling of connection with the road surface.



8 LIFESPAN
Loads of cars to unlock, plus the challenge of beating your own times.

VERDICT
Surprisingly good rally game that probably won't give Colin McRae any sleepless nights, but turns in an entertaining Gamecube performance.

NGC
INDEPENDENT NINTENDO GAMING



NGC STAR GAME

56 HP 114/169
TP 156/343
Lv 29 Geraint

GAME WORLD

There are around eight different locations to fight through, divided over two episodes. It's important to go through them in order. There are multiple quests to play in each world which give you valuable items and extra cash.

ONLINE PERSONA

There are three character classes to choose from. Force, Hunter and Ranger, each with four sub-species and each with unique skills and abilities. Choose wisely, because the character you select determines the way you play for the whole game.

ENEMIES

There are hundreds of them. Unfortunately, the enemies in each area are somewhat repetitive and aren't exactly smart. That doesn't mean they aren't tough, mind you. Always make sure you're constantly battling. Without fighting you'll never level up and get strong enough to use the best kit.

ACTION SLOTS

These particular icons correspond to the buttons on your pad. More can be accessed by holding down the R-button. You can designate your abilities to these slots, from weak to powerful attacks, to any items or spells that you have earned or learned. Go to it…

STOP PRESS!
UK ONLINE
DETAILS CONFIRMED!
SEE PAGE 26


INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	SONIC TEAM
PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	58
GBA LINK-UP	YES
SURROUND SOUND	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out now in the States and Japan. It should be out here on 7th March.

COST:
$50 (£35)



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

Sega's magical online RPG hits GC with new worlds, characters and secrets to explore…

PHANTASY STAR ONLINE

Chat, trade, cooperate and do battle!

△ This is the new Pioneer. Download quests from the lady behind the desk for some great extras.

△ This boss ends the irritating VR missions.



△ Not your average gibbon – it casts magic!



△ If you're knackered and don't have any potions, it's worth teleporting back to Pioneer to do some shopping.

BRAVE NEW WORLD

The GC version of *PSO* has a number of differences to set it apart from its older cousin…



LOBBY AND PIONEER

There are now much bigger lobbies, with far more detail in them. Pioneer's new layout is also much more efficient than it used to be, while the interior is more pleasing to the eye. Not that there was ever much wrong before.



THE GAME WORLDS

Initial impressions are disappointing (there's still pop-up for example) but EP 2, however, is stunning. The sea shore and mountain regions are particularly delightful, while Pioneer has been thoroughly refurbished. Lovely.



CHARACTER CLASS

An extra Force, Ranger and Hunter have been added to offer a greater range to choose from, which should provide veterans with something new. This added diversity also means that you're less likely to bump into clones.



CHEATING SCUM

Resets, hacks and item duplication from the DC version have yet to rear their ugly head, and the game is much better for it. Also, the problems found in the original Japanese GC version have now been sorted out completely.



HIDDEN EXTRAS

As well as a host of new rare items to be found in specific quests, Sonic Team have also hidden away downloadable games that can be used on your GBA via the link cable - like this rather smart mini version of Nights *shown above.*



GET INTO THE GAME

The process of getting into *PSO* is lengthy, but easier than you'd think.

LOGGING ON

Before you can really start playing properly (ie, online), you'll need a valid ISP (Internet Service Provider, such as Freeserve) to connect to the internet, as well as a hunter's licence. Although we're still unsure as yet, you'll almost certainly need to pay a subscription fee for this (in the US it costs around $9.00 per month).

Once you get online and you've created your character, you'll get all the help with the game's basics that you need via the real people you meet on Pioneer.





We're afraid we have a confession to make. At the time of writing, *Phantasy Star Online* is, well… offline. While Nintendo seem confident that the game will be released on 7th March alongside their modem and broadband adaptors, Infogrames (who are publishing the game in Europe) don't have any idea what's going on. However, the game *will* be out on 7th March (hence this review), and anyone sceptical about our knowledge of the title in its online form need only look at our Beginner's Guide in **NGC**/74. Or even better, a look at Jes and Geraint's phenomenal phone charges for both of the Dreamcast iterations and on the Japanese servers for the Gamecube version, should be enough to convince anyone.

> "THAT FEELING THAT YOU'VE ENTERED A WHOLE NEW WORLD TO EXPLORE: IT'S SPINE TINGLING..."

CHECKING IN

In many ways we're rather envious of people experiencing the game for the first time. Those tentative first steps into *PSO* are among our fondest gaming memories. Even



"Relentlessly slash your way through monsters with basic combos"



Δ Dragons attempting to flee (as usual).



Δ Many enemies can poison or paralyse you.



Δ The second section of the Caves...



Δ ...offers beauty at every turn. Almost.



Δ It might look a little ropey in places, but it's certainly not short on the magic effects...

SPLIT-SCREEN SCENE

New to PSO is the offline multiplayer mode for up to four players.

CRAZY CAMERA



While Phantasy Star Online *is still playable enough in four-player mode, the slow-down, pop-up and camera problems get pretty distressing at times. The camera is poor at the best of times, but when you're all battling it out in the ruins against multiple foes, with loads of magic effects spewing out all over the shop, things get pretty confusing.*

NORMAL QUESTING

This is the better mode for multiplayer as it lets you and three mates get to grips with each location, while levelling up simultaneously. The experience is pretty much the same as online, except you can actually talk to each other rather than type your communications out. This can make the tougher boss battles much easier to deal with.

BATTLE MODE



Pretty much as the name suggests. You and your mates are stuck in an area not too dissimilar to EP2's second VR mission, and you're left to fight it out amongst yourselves. The points-based scoring system makes things just a touch more interesting than simple kill counts. This is a great way to practise before being shown up online.

CHALLENGE MODE



This is one of the online mode's best features, but it doesn't really stack up in multiplayer mode. Challenge mode consists of super-tough mini-quests. You're stripped of your level status and all your hard-earned items, and have to fight through and survive relentless hordes of monsters. A real trial-by-fire, this one – and not always in a fun way.

the menu screens are wonderfully atmospheric. The soft, lilting music is almost hypnotic (fans of the traditional *Phantasy Star* RPG's won't be disappointed – there are some cracking remixes of old tunes hidden away) and the process of choosing your online persona is a true labour of love. Once you've registered your character and connected you'll be beamed into one of the game's lobbies. It's at this moment that you'll get your first 'spine tingler'. That feeling that you've entered a whole new world to explore. The amazement as other users' characters beam into the lobby. Speech bubbles emerge from their heads displaying greetings, and talking about items and regions that you have yet to discover for yourself. Give a little 'hello' or ask for some help and you'll be the recipient of eager users happy to lend you a hand. Within a quarter of an hour you'll be in the process of organising a team of new friends (up to four can play at the same time) to start a game. Once you've decided on your comrades, you head down to the game's central hub on Pioneer 2.

FRIENDS LIKE THESE

From Pioneer 2 you can access the teleporter to take you to the game's various locations. You can go to the shops to buy magic abilities, weapons, armour and items like health potions. There's also a bank for you to store any cash or items you want to keep for a rainy day. Once you're tooled up you're ready to go.

Once on the surface, it doesn't take long to figure out that the game itself is pretty basic. The environments are both luscious and expansive, but what you're actually doing is limited. You relentlessly slash your way through monsters with your character's basic combo.

Every now and again, you'll let off a blast of magic (if your particular character allows for it). Eventually, you'll have worked through the level before reaching the impressive boss encounter. Finish it off and

"A WORD OF WARNING: ONCE YOU'VE BOUGHT THE GAME, YOU'LL NEED TO KEEP PAYING TO KEEP PLAYING..."



STORY-BORED

Those coming to PSO thinking it will be a traditional RPG will be disappointed. There is a certain amount of 'story', but it's only told through little pods you find on the ground, or through the few NPCs that populate Pioneer 2. Narrative isn't PSO's strong point. Instead it relies on Diablo-style gameplay and human interaction.

DOING TIME OFFLINE

The offline game is very basic and pretty tedious – but it's a good way for you to see the kinds of things you'll be doing…



1. Your first job is to design your character. In this instance we've created a squat, fat, ginger pixie-girl, called Norman.



2. You're then beamed onto Pioneer2. You'll need to visit the Principal, who'll fill you in on your first mission.


3. The first location is the easy-on-the-eye forest. Go into the first area, get an enemy targeted and dish out the smack.



4. Because Norman is a Force, her fighting skills are weak, and deal little damage. Why not try some fire magic instead?



5. That's more like it. Using magic depletes her TP bar, though. You'll need to look for items to re-stock this in the crates scattered around.



6. Once an area has been cleared, the doors are unlocked and you can progress to the next, more dangerous area.



7. With each defeated enemy, you'll acquire EXP which will eventually allow you to level up, making you stronger.


8. Keep battling through the areas, collecting items to sell later. After a while you'll be able to warp to the next forest map.



9. Make your life easier by assigning regularly used items to different shortcuts, allowing you to bypass the menu screen.


10. That warp area on the left takes you to the boss room. Before you enter, it's worth teleporting back to Pioneer to stock up.


11. Get used to intense item-management and learn the statistics of the items in your possession. This is the key to success.

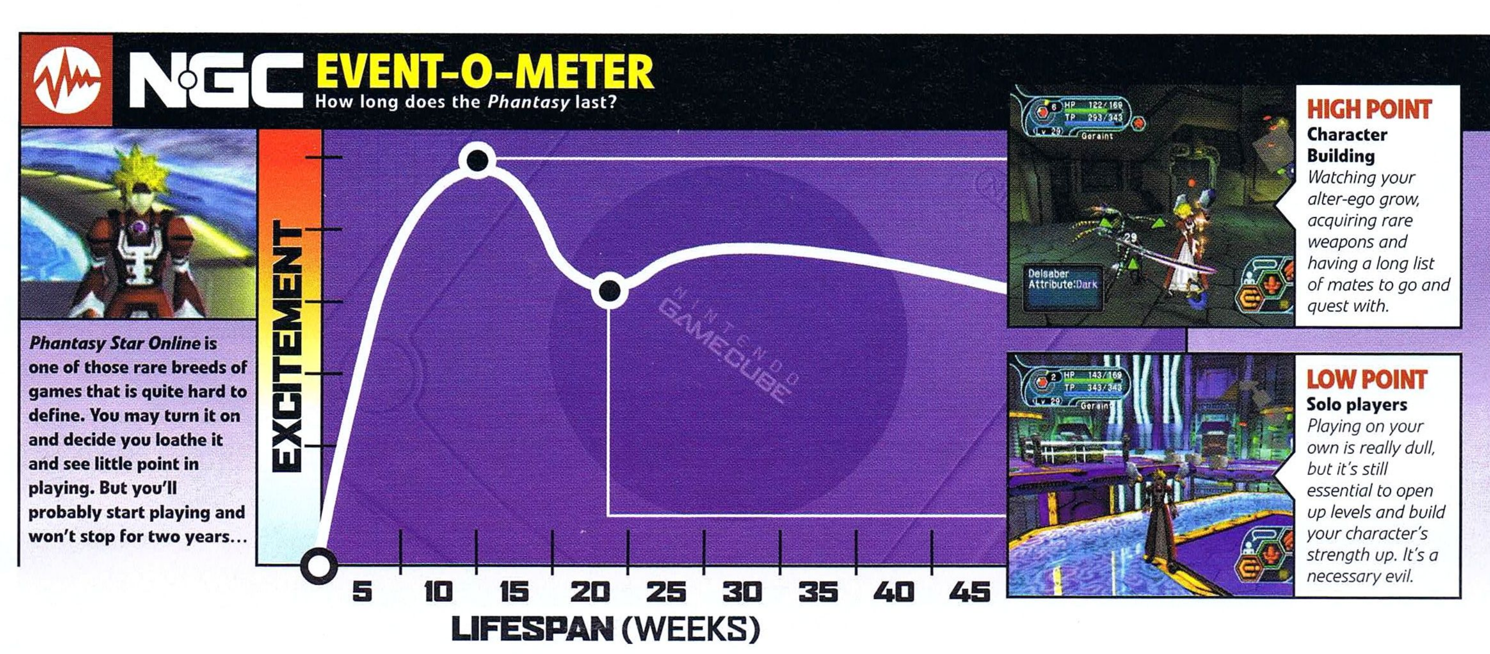


12. Norman is still very weak, so the possibility of her surviving a battle with this giant beast is about 3000 to 1. How we laugh.



"It's not so much an RPG, more a beautifully realised version of *Gauntlet*"

NGC EVENT-O-METER
How long does the *Phantasy* last?



Phantasy Star Online **is one of those rare breeds of games that is quite hard to define. You may turn it on and decide you loathe it and see little point in playing. But you'll probably start playing and won't stop for two years...**

HIGH POINT
Character Building
Watching your alter-ego grow, acquiring rare weapons and having a long list of mates to go and quest with.

LOW POINT
Solo players
Playing on your own is really dull, but it's still essential to open up levels and build your character's strength up. It's a necessary evil.



△ Get to the Ruins and you'll have a real battle on your hands. It's essential to take a hunter with you.



△ Ah, the old neon of the Mines. Lightning techniques rule in here.





you'll be beamed back to Pioneer for more of the same.

Ordinarily, we'd deride a game that, structurally, was as dull as what we've just described. With *Phantasy Star Online*, however, it's simply not justified. It's an entirely different breed of game from just about anything else out there. It's not so much an RPG, more a beautifully realised version of *Gauntlet*. While the basic dynamics of the game are pretty dull, when combined with the online aspect it turns it into something magical. The thrill of finding rare items. The joy of getting your tactics in a battle sorted, with Hunters taking the lead with melée attacks, Rangers distracting, trap-stopping and stalling enemies by firing into the fray, while Forces race to revive fallen friends, heal the weak, boost power and throw lightning at multiple targets.



EXPENSIVE

A word of warning. Once you've bought the game you'll need to keep paying to keep playing. There will doubtless be a monthly subscription charge, and in order to get the most out of the game you'll need a keyboard pad for ease of communication. They're currently only available in Japan and will set you back a whopping £65...

That feeling you get when you've destroyed a boss through sheer cooperation is delightful. The sense of cameraderie you feel giving items to more needy individuals, or someone giving you the extra 5,000 meseta (money) you need for *that* weapon you've been after. Forces trading magic, Hunters swapping info on how to create better weapons. Meeting up with regular fighting partners, or being taken to new areas by more experienced rangers for that little extra help levelling up. All this and more defines what *PSO* means to those who love it, not the basic gameplay.

Unfortunately, until Nintendo and Infogrames agree on a modem package, keyboard availability and, more importantly, the price of the game (you'll more than likely need to pay a subscription on top of the game price) it's going to be hard to ascertain the game's accessibility.

True, *Phantasy Star Online* won't be to everyone's tastes, but there's no denying its unique sense of community should be experienced by everyone at least once.

GERAINT EVANS

> **"WHILE THE BASIC DYNAMICS OF THE GAME ARE PRETTY DULL, THE ONLINE ASPECT MAKES IT MAGICAL"**



- GC online at last!
- Highly addictive.
- Loads of game hours.
- Beautiful game world.




- Very expensive.
- Basic gameplay.
- Ruins your social life.
- An acquired taste.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy
Midway
NGC/68 25%
Okay, it's not as good as *PSO*...



7 VISUALS
A mixture of the divine sits alongside flaws that were around on DC.

8 SOUNDS
Atmospheric, hypnotic with some lovely remixes of old tunes.

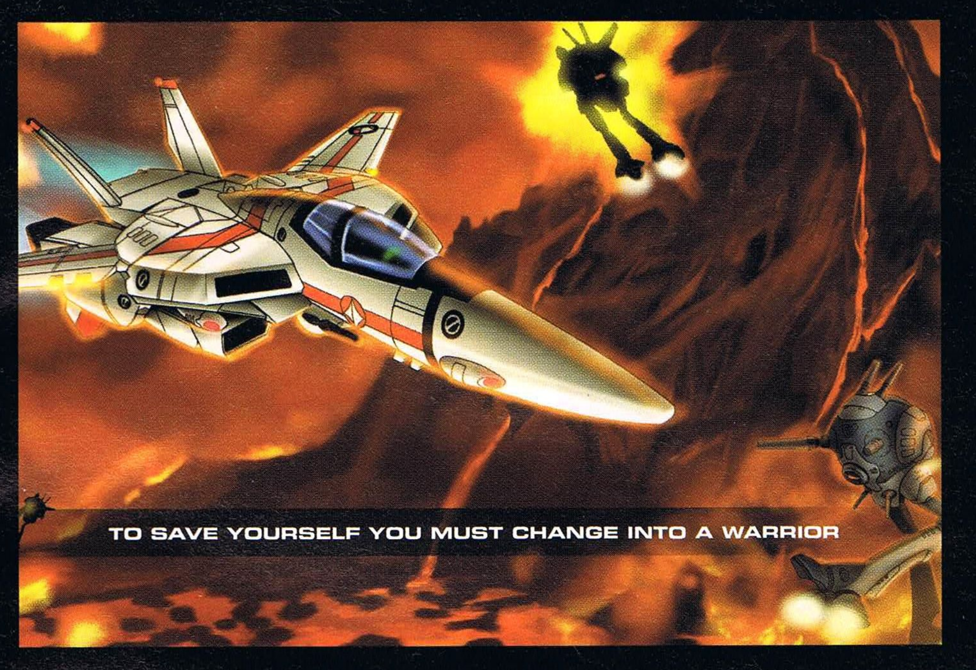
5 MASTERY
Camera needs overhauling, and the DC levels need sprucing.

10 LIFESPAN
Fall in love with it and you're looking at weeks of your life gone.

VERDICT
A gloriously realised futuristic *Gauntlet*-style playground where you can chat, trade, cooperate and do battle. Pure magic.











- OVER 30 ADRENALINE PUMPING MISSIONS.
- TRANSFORM FROM MECHA, OR GUARDIAN TO A JET FIGHTER AT ANYTIME.
- TWO PLAYER SPLIT SCREEN ACTION.



TO SAVE YOUR PLANET YOU MUST CHANGE INTO A HERO!









NINTENDO GAMECUBE

XBOX

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TDK mediactive

www.tdk-mediactive.com

"This is high production, big-budget gaming"



△ Ubi Soft have done away with the oxygen bar when Rayman is beneath the water.



△ Bonus games include Racket Jump (Tennis) Razzoff's Circus (FPS) and the superb Mad Trax.



△ The power-ups are all time-limited, but some deplete quicker than others. Each booster lends Rayman temporary traits for solving conundrums and defeating enemies in particular areas or levels.



INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	UBI SOFT
PUBLISHER	UBI SOFT
PLAYERS	1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES	2
GBA LINK-UP	YES
WIDESCREEN	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
You can get your disembodied hands on some Rayman action by the 3rd March.

COST: £40

RAYMAN 3 HOODLUM HAVOC

The limbless French freak returns for a slice of precision jumping – old-skool style.



GET INTO THE GAME

Tentatively tip-toeing into *Hoodlum Havoc.*

ONE FOOT IN THE RAY

After the intro movie, you'll be hurled straight into a minigame that sees you collecting lums (energy-giving red blobs), before entering a training arena. On-screen prompts dictate which buttons do what as well explaining the combo system and how to lock-on when engaged in a fire fight with Hoodlums. There's plenty of opportunity to acclimatise to the controls – it's simple enough and skipping the options only means you've missed the opportunity to set the display to 16:9 mode with Dolby Pro Logic II Surround Sound.





We have a sneaking suspicion that some parties have got it in for Rayman. In fact, it's highly likely that there are those who consider his series of oh-so-cutesy 3D platformers to be the nadir of videogames: a suppurating cadaver, bloated by its own lack of inventiveness, swamped under a pall of out-of-date gameplay and formulaic smugness. Some of these dissidents may be even now among our very ranks, mingling with us on a day-to-day basis… (*That'll be Martin, then – Ed*)

What's even scarier is that they may have a point. But despite this, it could be argued that *Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc* is a first-rate example of how to create an entertaining, beautiful and downright proper videogame. All those who want to



OBSCURE REFERENCE #1

Bonk's Revenge: *NEC's home-grown hit for its PC Engine/TurboGrafx 16 was the sequel to Bonk's Adventure. Use your head to smack everything, gobble up fruit and meat for power and spin, jump and butt your way to rescuing Princess Za from King Drool.*

RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC

Bold, absorbing and endearing platform high-jinks

SCORE METER

Rack up those points as fast as you can. The combo meter appears and the more you earn, the more minigames, design sketches and movies you can unlock.

ENVIRONMENTS

Rayman 3 is awash with colour, imagination, odd humour and the plain baroque. The C-stick gives you control for 99 per cent of the time and sometimes it's hard not to stand and stare. The location sets are often the sweetest, but don't neglect the interiors either – there's beauty aplenty all around.

HOODLUMS

The bad guys waste no time in blasting you. That said, they'll often be facing the other way, so get those sneaky attacks in while you can. If they run off, they often return with reinforcements.

JEWELS

These gold or red (and occasionally green) opals are merely for point building, but if you can grab them fast enough, your combo meter will begin to spin, rewarding you with an exponential increase. And what do points make? Prizes! In this case, bonus games at the main menu. So get collecting.

DANGERS

When you start out, there's very little to threaten you, but as the game progresses, you can expect more and more perils – deep water, bottomless pits shrouded in mist, lava, lofty heights from which to fall and some surprises in the form of vicious, unseen creatures. Eyes peeled, then.

BOSSY BOOTS

One of the first mayors you face is huge pair of legs operated by a lone Hoodlum. Run over the blue power-up, press B to change to the rocket, then fly into the Hoodlum to knock him over. Now it's our turn – let the fiendish squashing begin!











"IT'S GOT A DOSE OF THE X-FACTOR: THE IMMEASURABLE QUALITY THAT WASHES OVER YOU AN HOUR INTO THE GAME. THIS IS A BIT SPECIAL"

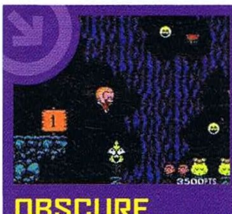
fiddle with brake bias or study the results of stats-based football matches are a long way from home.

PLUS ÇA CHANGE

Press Power and your first glance might tell you that not much has changed. The N64 and Dreamcast versions of *Rayman 2* weren't shabby at all, and the third chapter certainly seems very similar – very similar indeed. But about three minutes later, it becomes evident that Ubi Soft have managed to squeeze in a much broader palette, not to mention bags more detail. The Cube effortlessly pushes a whole lot of beautiful graphics around, and the inclusion of Dolby Pro Logic II seals the deal – this is a high-production, big-budget game.

Of more concern are the new gameplay traits – or lack thereof. Okay, so the more traditional-style power-ups have been ditched in favour of time-restricted cans, each lending Rayman temporary traits for solving puzzles or defeating enemies in the local area. For example, the basic projectile fist is joined by a chargeable version for breaking down doors, or one that employs tornadoes to suck up Hoodlums. There's a reasonable variety and you need to master them all in order to advance, but they offer small change to the bulk of the game. Additionally, there's a *Zelda*-style strafe/lock-on function, as well the ability to bend shots round obstacles. All very useful, but hardly revolutionary in the grand scheme of things.

What else? A combo mode that increases your points exponentially when you collect gold and red jewels, provided you keep the sequence in motion. Enemies have a bit more savvy, being able to dodge shots and even take cover, but that's really nothing unusual. Anything more? No, not really. And



OBSCURE REFERENCE #2

Blue's Journey: developed by Alpha Denshi for the Neo Geo, Blue's Journey is a supercutie, allowing one- or two-player simultaneous platforming action. Innovative touches included a leaf attack, as well as the ability to shrink, thus fitting into hard-to-reach areas.

DID YOU KNOW? There's some rather unpleasant humour in *Rayman 3*. Just listen to the Fairy Counsellors when you free them. One of them had to 'drop the kids off at the pool'. Yuck!

"For all the claims of staid method, it remains a delight to play"

NGC FIELD OF PLAY

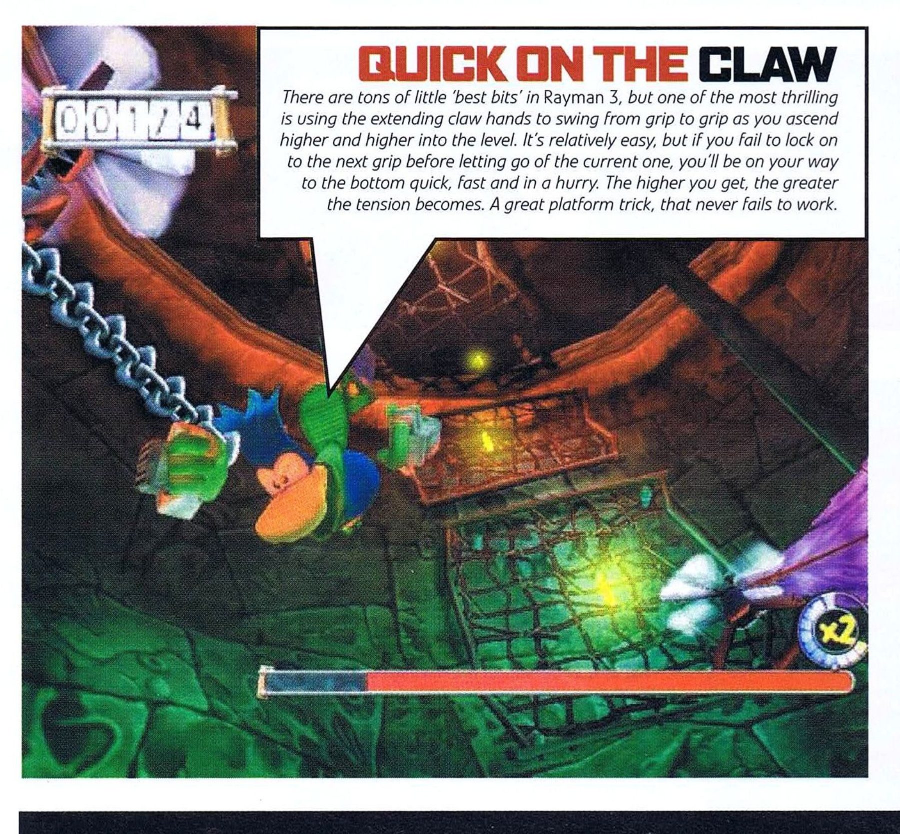
Rayman 3 offers the most astonishing GBA link-up we've ever seen...

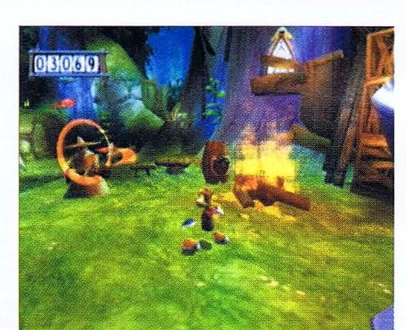
GC AND GBA LINKED

One of the unlockables is a racing game that involves a second player utilising a linked GBA to lay track with Tetris-style blocks as fast as he can for the first player to race over. Hook up both machines with a GC-to-GBA link cable – you don't need a GBA version of the game!

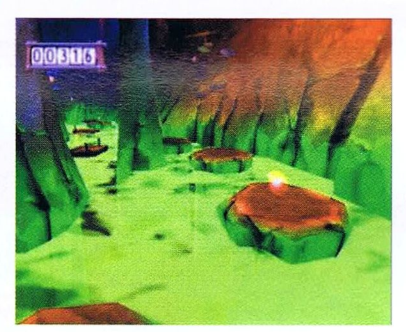
FRIENDS

Of course, if you haven't got any of these, you're screwed. That is, unless you can find some way to operate a GBA with your feet and swivel your eyes independently – in which case, you're some sort of horrific orang-utang/chameleon hybrid and must be killed immediately.





△ The arrow dictates the path of your attack.



△ Avoid landing in the green slime. Really.



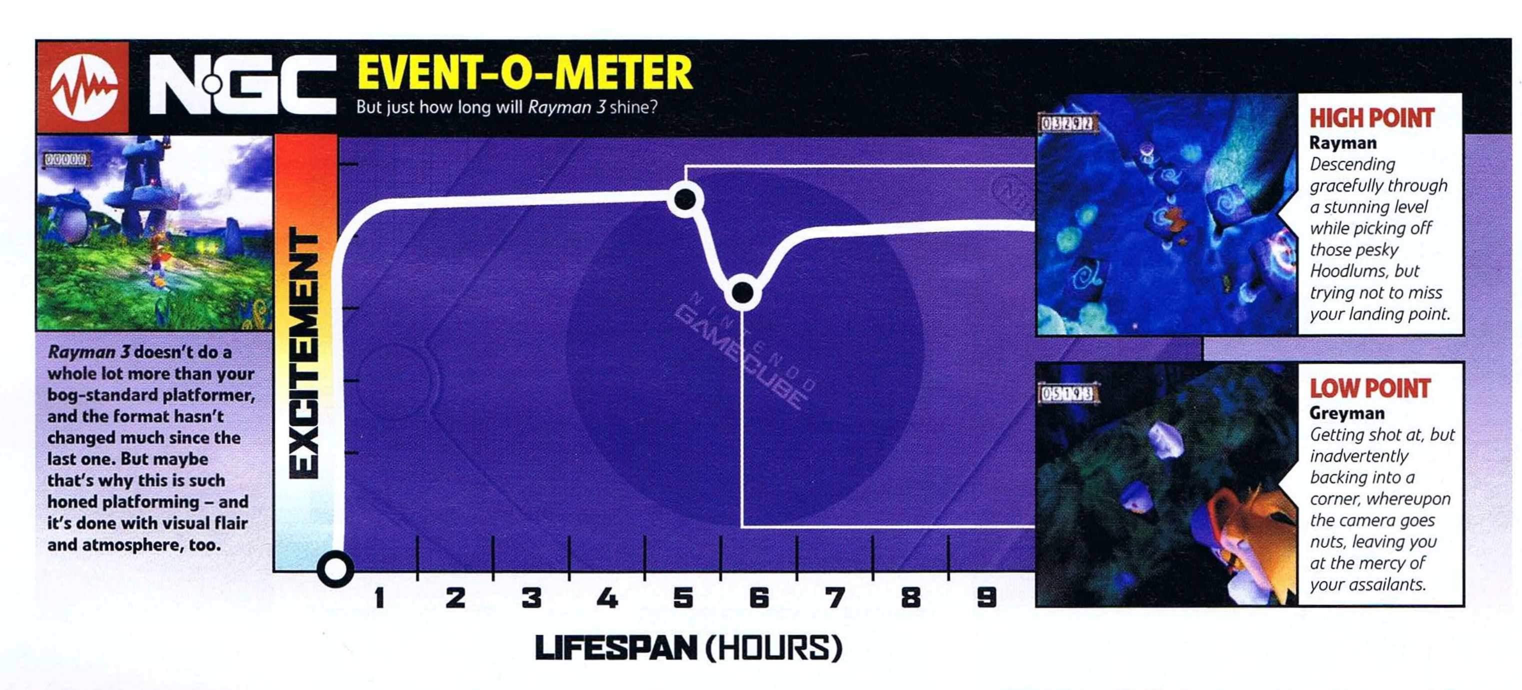
that's where things start to get, well, a little philosophical. (*Brace yourselves – Ed*)

COMME IL FAUT

If we had our cynics' hats on, it would be easy to criticise *Rayman 3* for being more of the same. The story is merely a continuation of *The Great Escape* the characters are either the same or similar (Globox, The Fairy Council, Hoodlums, and so on), and the recipe for the gameplay remains carved-in-stone platforming, interspersed with brief minigames. But for all the claims of staid method or immutable blueprint, *Rayman 3* remains a delight to play. The question is, why? And that's the hard part to quantify – a certain je ne sais quoi. So let's put it under the microscope…

To begin with, the platform ethos is ancient, from *Manic Miner* to *Banjo-Kazooie*. Chronology irrespective, they all adhere to certain principles: constantly collectable baubles that award points; roaming enemies with set (and, more importantly) memorable patterns; wondrous, fantastical, lusciously-drawn landscapes to explore; imaginative bosses that always end up playing the role of Goliath, despite their initial ferocity; a certain degree of innocence and naivety – best example is the simpering Mickey Mouse in *Castle of Illusion* on the Mega Drive, grinning irrepressibly and swinging his hips, even under threat of splatterage from a rampaging log monster – and finally, an almost unspoken demand for precision dexterity from the player. Platform games have been standing still for the past 20

DID YOU KNOW? France built the Statue of Liberty and presented it to the Americans as a celebration of the country's new-found freedom from the ruling British. And what did they get in return? Euro Disney.

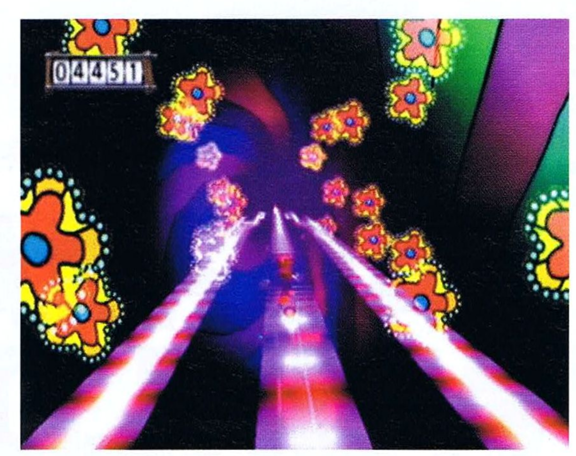





△ Bosses are all of the *Sonic* type; hulking, but overly-complex machinery in their bid to pulverise you.







△ Bonus levels are hallucinogenic affairs that morph around you.

years, with only *Super Mario 64* transforming the genre and pushing it towards the future (and spawning a million copycats in the process). Nevertheless, *Rayman 3* conforms to the above ideals with such alacrity, one begins to suspect that either softcos are inherently lazy, or that, perhaps, platform games attained perfection so long ago, everything after had better follow the formula, or die trying.

TOUR DE FORCE

But this is mere scientific observation. Playing *Rayman 3* is something else. It's got a dose of the X-factor: the immeasurable, almost indescribable quality that washes over you an hour into the game – the slow-dawning *feeling* that you're playing something a bit special, a bit magical.

OBSCURE REFERENCE #3

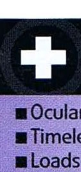
***Liquid Kids:** available for the PC Engine/TurboGrafx 16, as well as the Japanese Saturn, this was Taito's unofficial successor to The New Zealand Story, but bore small resemblance to it. Rush to the end of the level to save your captured friends, but expect much frustration – it's merciless stuff.*

There's a raft of special tricks that seem no more than mere distraction at first, but ultimately mould the game into what it is: descending from vertigo-inducing heights on the helicopter hair, the camera craning above you to reinforce the adrenaline; scaling wall creepers to pass huge gaps in the landscape; racing a mini-shoe in pursuit of another; ascending a pillar formed from hundreds of balloons or simply swinging over the last lava pool just before the claw hands power-up timer runs out. Many of these sections require multiple attempts, but the game is never unfair. Tough, yes; infuriating, definitely, but never unjust. The satisfaction from finally caning that mid-level boss becomes just one of many rewards, one of a multitude of little victories *Rayman 3* awards for piecemeal progress.

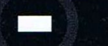
Restart points are never that far back and the urge to press on and discover what's around the corner far outweighs any Z-buffer glitches or seemingly insurmountable numbers of accurate Hoodlums.

If you're one of those we left back at the second paragraph (*sorry about that – Ed*) and you haven't got your brake bias balanced, you're never going to dig *Rayman 3*'s splendour. But you never felt much akin with *Super Mario 64*, either. And that's a shame, because there's something here that so many soulless, violent titles seem to be missing these days: and that's unshackled, imaginative gameplay. Indeed, with all its genre-specific foibles, *Rayman 3: Hoodlum Havoc* may not always be right – but, equally, it's never wrong either.

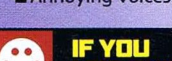
NEIL RANDALL



- Ocular ecstasy.
- Timeless gameplay.
- Loads of great extras to unlock.



- Won't appeal to everyone.
- No real innovation.
- Annoying voices.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Super Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73 96%
The last word in 3D platforming.



8 VISUALS
Sumptuous, candy-coloured designs and some fine particle effects.

8 SOUNDS
A quality mix of orchestral score, acid jazz and comical cues.

8 MASTERY
Gives the Cube a thorough visual and sonic workout.

6 LIFESPAN
Two weeks at a few hours a night, but the minigames are a laugh.

VERDICT
A bold, absorbing and endearing platformer that never bores, never punishes and always allows you to see a little bit more.

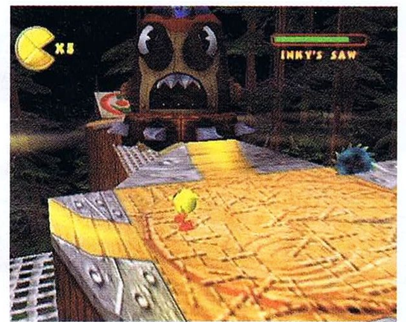


84

"The bosses are amusing nods at Namco's rich arcade history"



△ He's a happy little blob, isn't he? You can see it in those mad, staring eyes of his.



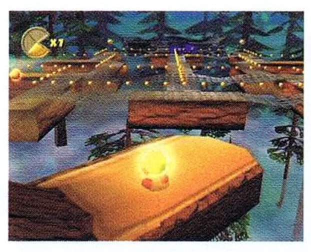
△ Inky drives his giant robot self. Freudian.

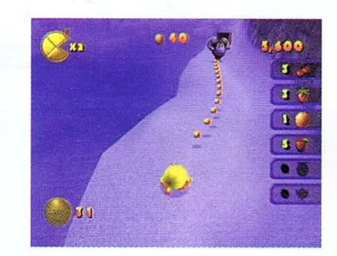


△ Back in Pac Village, where live the Pac-Men.



△ Note to Namco: shimmying along ledges is what Lara Croft does. It is NOT what Pac-Man does, and these parts of the game are pretty dull.





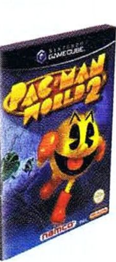


INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	NAMCO
PUBLISHER	NAMCO/EA
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	16
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	YES
SURROUND SOUND	YES

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Available from 14th March, anywhere you can buy games. Such as a games shop, for instance.

COST: £40



PAC-MAN WORLD 2

The Pac is back, and this time he's Mario…

Believe it or not, Pac-Man is the only videogame hero who predates Mario. The little yellow blob was gobbling dots almost a full year before the Mazz decided to lay some smack down on poor Kong. He's as old as they come.

And now it seems as if Pac-Man, suffering some kind of mid-life crisis, actually wants to *be* his younger, more successful rival. Mario jumps; Pac jumps. Mario butt-slams; Pac makes a valiant attempt to do the same, despite having no discernible arse. Mario turns metallic and walks on the sea bed; Pac steals his idea as shamelessly as a gypsy rifling through an old lady's biscuit tin.

This isn't the place to come if originality is something you value in your games collection, but it's actually nowhere near as poor as we expected it to be.

In fact, a lot of it is very entertaining. The treetop levels that make up the game's second set of stages are really well done, and the bosses are amusing nods at Namco's rich arcade history.

> "PAC-MAN, SUFFERING SOME KIND OF MID-LIFE CRISIS, WANTS TO BE HIS YOUNGER, MORE SUCCESSFUL RIVAL"

The game has its fair share of annoying sections. Sometimes it's due to the feeble camera system, which locks in place and switches angles at the worst possible moments. Mostly, the frustration factor is down to a handful of dodgy levels that play as though they were designed by a different (less talented) team than the good ones.

A handful of retro *Pac-Man* titles can be won by collecting bonus tokens, along with a *Pac-Man* jukebox and the option to replay any of the 3D mazes sections dotted around the game. Worth a rental, we'd say.

MARTIN KITTS



- Some good levels.
- Some nice graphics.
- Retro stuff.
- Waka-waka noises.



- Some poor levels.
- Wobbly camera.
- Highly unoriginal.
- Mario should sue.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Super Mario Sunshine
Nintendo
NGC/73 96%
Top 3D platforming with the main man.



7 VISUALS
As variable as the quality of gameplay. Some nice touches.

5 SOUNDS
Incredibly repetitive retro tunes. Authentic but not entirely pleasant.

6 MASTERY
They should have hired the *Mario 64* coders to fix that wobbly camera.

7 LIFESPAN
Although it isn't difficult to finish, getting 100 per cent will take a while.

VERDICT
Pac's perma-psychotic grin and mad, staring eyes make him a bit unloveable, but the game will help a wet weekend pass quickly.





DOOMED!
Allow the bubbles to advance all the way to the bottom of the screen and they turn into skulls. This means it's Game Over time.

BONUS
Burst enough of the right kind of bubbles and you'll win power-up items that can be used to freeze entire bubble stacks. It's the key to getting big combos.

IT'S YOU
Your dude skips around across the bottom of the screen, flinging bubbles. There are three to choose from, plus two bonus characters to unlock.



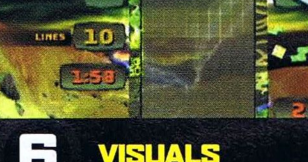
- Burst bubbles in three dimensions.
- Never ends – just gets faster.



- Getting combos is mostly about luck.
- Playfield can get confusingly cluttered.

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Tetris Worlds
THQ
NGC/73 38%
The old Game Boy versions are far better, mind.





6 VISUALS
Fairly typical for a puzzle game – bright lights, special effects.

5 SOUNDS
Plenty of tunes, but it all depends on how much you like cheese.

4 MASTERY
Bear in mind that the PSone version looks almost the same.

7 LIFESPAN
Get a two-player game going and just trance out to the 'music'.

VERDICT
If you're looking for something mindless and hypnotic, look no further. Or look at *Wetrix* on the N64. Your choice.





SUPER BUBBLE POP

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	RUNECRAFT
PUBLISHER	JALECO
PLAYERS	1–2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
We reckon it should be available by the time you read this, release date fans.



COST: £40

Great name, no? But what it lacks in the marketing department, it makes up for in bubbles. And popping.

Matching coloured blobs is one of the classic console pastimes, from *Puyo Puyo* to *Columns* to *Puzzle Bobble* and beyond. All essentially the same game with various minor adjustments, and here we have the latest evolution of the old 'match three of a kind and hope for a chain reaction' concept.

However, the difference this time is that it's in 3D. Stacks of coloured bubbles advance from the far end of the playing area, and the aim is to beat them back by creating rows or columns of three or more identical colours.

Bursting your character's favourite colour fills up a special attack meter, for launching screen-clearing weapons of mass destruction. That's really all there is to it, although it's trickier in practice than in theory, particularly when the bubbles creep towards the bottom of the screen.

It's a conversion of a game that was distributed via the internet last year, and its PC roots show in the customisation features such as alternate bubble 'skins', background graphics, and a music playlist. The PC version could actually generate new bubble patterns from your own MP3 collection, but here you'll have to be content with the 20-or-so cheesy dance tunes on offer.

> **"IF YOU'RE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING MINDLESS AND HYPNOTIC THEN LOOK NO FURTHER THAN THIS..."**

There's a two-player mode that shrinks the playing area and throws in some new power-ups for messing with your opponent's bubble tactics. There are 150 levels to beat, at the end of which you'll either be operating on a higher plane of consciousness, or reduced to a twitching parody of your former self.

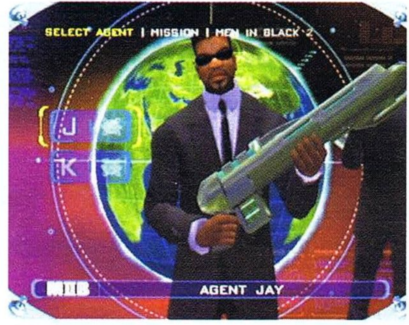
It's fun and absorbing. Not quite as good as the cheaper PC version, and a bit too confusing to be a proper rival for *Puzzle Bobble/ Bust A Move*, but a lot better than *Zoocube*, the puzzle-starved Gamecube's previous brain-teaser of choice.

MARTIN KITTS

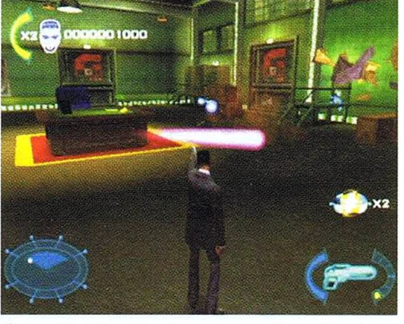
"The whole thing is completely and utterly useless"



Δ Jay looks on as things start to go awry. Just as we look on as the game starts to go awry.



Δ Choose between Smith and Jones. You also get to meet up with the aliens from the film.



Δ The first few levels are so mind-numbingly tedious, it's pretty impossible to stick with 'em.



Δ Even on the latter stages, all the aliens still look the same as they did when you started out.

MEN IN BLACK II ALIEN ESCAPE



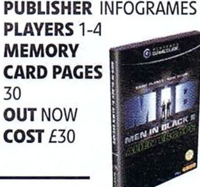
DEVELOPER INFOGRAMES
PUBLISHER INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS 1-4
MEMORY CARD PAGES 30
OUT NOW
COST £30



Shoot aliens in a game based on a not-very-good-at-all film.

Recreating that famous bit in the recent movie where Jay and Kay continually fire guns at relentless waves of samey aliens, *Alien Escape* hopes to mix a little *Shadowman* with a lot of *Max Payne* – except it's nowhere as good as either.

The set up's decent enough. The cut scenes are slick, the voice acting's good, the menu screens have all the right noises and all the right music, but the actual game is a tedious experience, so bereft of enjoyment it makes the film seem like the best slice of sci-fi since Star Wars.



With a predictable mission structure – go here to rescue this, go there to take out that – the game performs an A-Z tour of New York before ramping up the excitement and boarding an alien spaceship. If you manage to stick it out, you'll probably quite enjoy this bit as it makes a pleasant change from the endless warehouses you find yourself running through for the rest of the game, and the equally endless – and cretinous – extra-terrestrials you have to blow into piles of, erm, dust.

The central problem with the game is that it's just not any fun. The only reason *Alien Escape* is a challenge is because it chucks the occasional mid-level boss into the mixer. Otherwise, you could dispatch the same aliens the same way all day – and probably with your eyes closed. It features all the film's weapons, (well, six of them) and all your favourite aliens, (including, you'll be pleased to hear, the one that looks like dog poop) but that doesn't make a blind bit of difference to a game that feels out of place and out of time. Just like the film it's based on.





Δ Either those ants are very giant, or Jimmy is very small. Either way, his game stinks of armpits.

JIMMY NEUTRON BOY GENIUS



DEVELOPER BIG SKY
PUBLISHER THQ
PLAYERS 1
MEMORY CARD PAGES 3
OUT NOW
COST £40



Ladies and gents, we have a new low point for Gamecube!



Kiddie games. Almost always rubbish, aren't they? This one is no exception to the rule, looking and playing like it was cobbled together from internet freeware demos and the kind of stuff you get pre-loaded on cheap mobiles phones.

It's about as useless as they come. There are jerky platform sections, puzzles that wouldn't tax a monkey, (let alone a child) and a shoot-'em-up that makes the Game Boy *Powerpuff Girls* games look state-of-the-art…

The whole thing is completely and utterly useless. If the Jimmy Neutron licence is as big as its owners at Nickelodeon seem to think, they must be seething with rage at the sight of this feeble game.

Shockingly, the instruction manual credits are close to 150 people, all of whom ought to be hanging their heads in shame if they honestly had a hand in putting this thing together.

Parents looking for suitable entertainment for youngsters might as well lock their offspring in a darkened games room with a copy of *Resident Evil Zero*. It might not be the ideal thing for a young audience, but *Jimmy Neutron* is far more likely to lead to nightmare flashbacks in later life. With any luck, nobody will buy this and we'll be spared a new breed of society-hating serial killers in 20 years' time. Fingers crossed.





Δ Jimmy bounces on his pogo-dog, which also turns into a skateboard.

DID YOU KNOW? Tommy Lee Jones, star of Men in Black 2, (the film) has never taken a single acting lesson. At college, he roomed with mekon-foreheaded presidential candidate Al Gore.



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TENCHU 3
SOUL CALIBUR 2
• MIDNIGHT CLUB 2 • METAL GEAR SOLID 2: SUBSTANCE • SUPER MONKEY BALL 2 • C&C GENERALS • DOA XTREME BEACH VOLLEYBALL • PANZER DRAGOON ORTA • RAYMAN 3 • VIRTUA TENNIS GBA
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EXCLUSIVE PLAYTEST! FUTURAMA
Bite my shiny metal ass! See Bender in action on PS2, Cube and Xbox. It's another GM first!
REVIEWED! DEVIL MAY CRY 2
Hell's teeth! Capcom's super sharp shooter returns to PS2!
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MORTAL KOMBAT DEADLY ALLIANCE
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UK REVIEW!
METROID PRIME
The best GameCube game ever? Get the essential GM verdict!
PLAYSTATION 2 > XBOX > GAMECUBE > GAME BOY ADVANCE > PC > PSone

"The combat actually manages to make your thumbs ache"



Packet of razor blades, please.

THE LORD OF THE RINGS THE TWO TOWERS

Learn a three-strike combo, fearless warrior. Now venture forth and hack-'n'-slash your heart out. Or until your thumbs hurt.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	EA
PUBLISHER	EA
PLAYERS	1
MEMORY CARD PAGES	1
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Americanly-speaking, it's currently in the US shops as we type. March for the UK, mind.

COST: £40

Rather like reinterpreting an epic, much-loved book into a movie, transforming that movie into a computer game is a process fraught with difficulty. How do you recreate the events of the film in a faithful way, and provide the gamer with an experience that, while mirroring the action, creates an experience worth having in its own right? It's a prickly problem. And one can't help but think that EA haven't approached the task seriously enough – at least, not seriously enough for discerning gamers who appreciate originality and like to be surprised.

But we'll get onto why it's disappointing in a moment. In many ways, the game works well, simply because it's buffed to a high shine in the graphics and physics departments. The environments look absolutely stunning; beautifully atmospheric and very much like the movie sets. Dashing through the Amon Hen forests chased by a raging warband of Uruk Hai warriors is a sight to behold. It's almost photo-realistic in places. Similarly, the character models are pretty well animated, especially the heroes and the bigger bosses.

While it bears the name of the second film, the game depicts events from The Fellowship of the Ring as well. We therefore see situations such as Aragorn's battle with the Ringwraiths at Weathertop, and the Fellowship battling off orcs and a bloody huge cave troll in the Mines of Moria. But as you work chronologically through the tale, the problems with the game begin to manifest themselves.

At heart, the game's a hack-'n'-slasher, in which you swing your sword or axe

FAITHFUL TO THE END

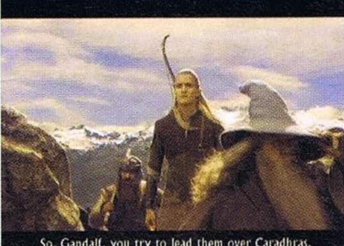
Being good little licensees, EA have stuck very firmly to the plot of the film…



POINTY END
Legolas pops an arrow in the gaping maw of the octopus thingy at the gates of Moria.



DEAD MAN ORCING
Lurtz, the Uruk Hai general, lowers his bow after greasing Boromir. Git.



JUST LIKE THE MOVIE!
Cinematic cut-scenes straight from the movie provide a running commentary.



SHORT EXTRA COVER
Gimli covers Frodo's escape at the heights of Amon Hen.



HELL – MY FINGER!
Sauron the deceiver prepares to have his digits lopped off. Heh.



DRUMMERS GET WICKED
The Fellowship hears drums in the deep, and faces a sustained orc attack.



LOST IN THE WOODS
Tracking Merry and Pippin, Aragorn enters Fangorn Forest.



THE BEST OF ELFS
He's handy with his bow is our Legolas, just like the movies. A gifted archer.



△ You can destroy most enemies with basic combos.

△ Gimli is one of the game's three playable characters.



△ Stunning visuals mask the basic nature of the game.

repeatedly at seemingly endless hordes of enemies. Repeated killing is the basic premise, and you're rarely diverted from this trail of mindless destruction. That's about the size of it, really. Granted, there's a kind of RPG-lite upgrade system, whereby you gain experience points through combat and spend them on swankier, more powerful and more intricate combos. But the fact remains that the moves you begin with are fine for the main body of the game. Your basic three-strike combo is performed by tapping A three, er, times. This is the quickest and easiest method of slaughter available to you, and is fine for killing fat swathes of enemy troops. It won't work when you face chaps with shields; or bosses; or creatures that are especially skilled in combat, so that's where the upgrades come in.

> **"REPEATED KILLING IS THE BASIC PREMISE, AND YOU'RE RARELY DIVERTED FROM THIS DESTRUCTION"**

However, 90 per cent of the game can be stormed through using the basic combos. And the fact is, that's what you end up using, because the later combos are more cumbersome to perform. It's the same with any of the three optional characters. Ranged weapons add a level of security, and Legolas is more skilled than either Aragorn or Gimli – the other two playable characters. But on the whole, combat is repetitive, in a way that actually manages to make your thumbs ache. Quite an achievement.

It's all about the money, folks. This game has been designed for mass-market consumption, and thus, it's so simple and basic in execution that anyone could understand it. That doesn't prevent it from offering some level of challenge. Neither does it mean that the game's technically lacking. On the contrary; it's beautiful, and very slick. It's just devoid of inspiration, and has you constantly hovering at the edge of boredom. If you're an older, intelligent gamer, it'll leave you cold. But your kid brother may love it.

AL BICKHAM



THAT'S A WRAP

The game frequently melts into CG cut-scenes as a way of drawing you back into the game. While this may seem like a good plan, it's always too rushed – the CG characters move fast and jerkily, making those overplayed gesticulations common to 90 per cent of all CG animation. But the scene with the cave troll that the Fellowship meets in Moria is wonderfully animated.



- Faithful to the films.
- Slick and polished.
- Stacks of combat.



- Stacks of combat.
- Highly repetitive.
- Low on originality.



IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Mystic Heroes
THQ
NGC/75 71%
3D slasher more in the spirit of Gauntlet than *Dark Legacy*…





9 VISUALS
Absolutely glorious in places, and quite atmospheric.

8 SOUNDS
Voice-cuts from the film and clamour of battle. Hurrah!

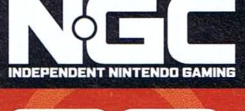


7 MASTERY
A good, solid and fast-paced engine, with very little slow-down.



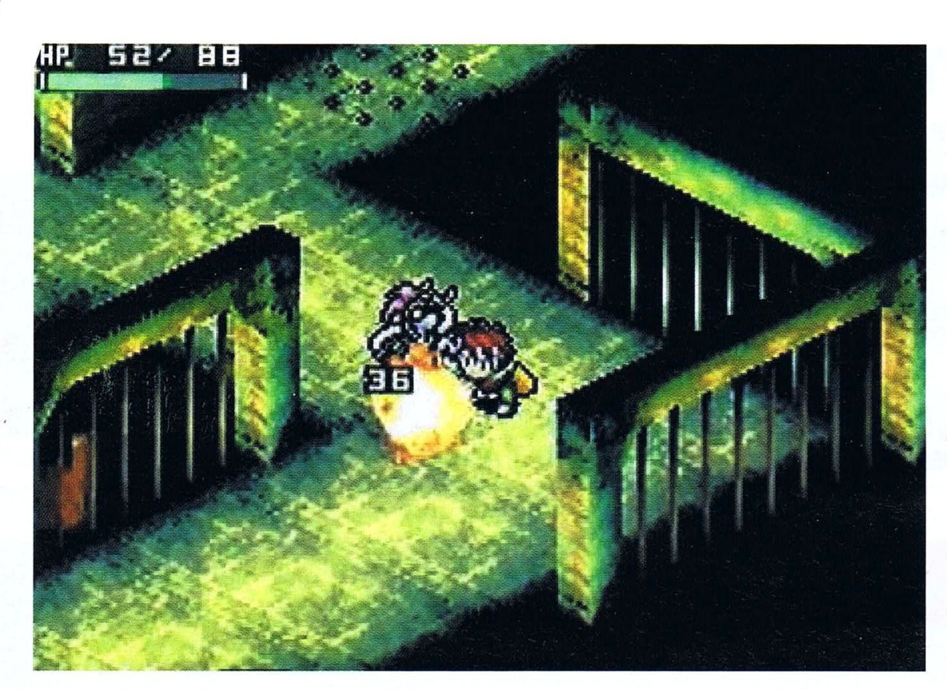
4 LIFESPAN
Boredom deters repeat playing. And it's not a long game, either.

VERDICT
An ornamental game. It looks lovely, and makes all the right noises, but it lacks that essential soul. Substance-free.

















△ Karking it is rare: but note the cutesy angels.



Wizard, Archer, Warrior and (top left) Dragonute.



△ Here be the excellent icon-driven item system.

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-2
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

SHINING SOUL

Sega. Bright sparks on all formats, but not this time, as *Shining Soul* cries out for a splodge of Brasso.



Flick the switch once this cart slots home, and the first thing you have to do is choose between one of four character types; Warrior, Wizard, Archer or inhuman Dragonute. On a whim, we opted for the bowman and… hey, that dude looks just like Link! Could we be in for a sprawling adventure matched only by the retro joys of *Golden Sun*? Short answer: no.



△ Prontis. The central hub of the game and the only place you can trade items.

"YOU CAN BUY BETTER SPELLS AND WEAPONS BEFORE HEADING OUT TO THWACK MONSTERS"

What you get is an okay hacker in the mould of EA's *Lord of the Rings* but with improvements to item management. Now there's a reason to get involved…

You start your adventure in Prontis – a town which acts like a central hub where you can buy better weapons and spells before heading out to thwack monsters. Each of the four character types has their own predictable style of attack (ranged assaults from the wiz and archer, hand-to-hand from the other two), and with these you're called upon to clear levels of enemies until a portal to the next stage opens. Say hello to the first reason to stick with *LOTR* as there's no indication how many monsters you need to top to achieve this. Wander about, batter enemies, pick up cool items that improve your battering ability and… what? In some instances skewering an obvious mini-boss does the trick; in others you're just killing time till a lucky strike pops the exit. Then there's the fact that whenever you select the brilliant item screen to re-equip or distribute EXP, you do it in real time. Cue monsters beating you to a pulp when you're not looking.

So, we're down on this – but not *that* down, as arcade boss battles, and a *Gauntlet*-style multiplayer boost it into contention.





DID YOU KNOW? The *Shining* series has been around for donkey's years – it's first appearance on a handheld was on Sega's Game Gear, as *Shining Force*.



△ All the guys from the Marvel comics show up.



△ This battle against Elektra is a toughie, as your ninja ladyfriend can cross her swords in defence.



INFO BURST

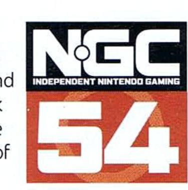
FORMAT	GBA
FROM	THQ
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	PASSWORD
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

DAREDEVIL

Not the Elektrafying storm in a DD-cup we expected…

It's a brave move when the beat-'em-up is taking a downturn in popularity across the board to code a resolutely old-skool, side-scrolling brawler. But after Elektra and Kingpin you're scraping the barrel for characters to fight with, so, what we get is DD jumping across cityscapes, beating up thugs and perpetually wandering back and forth across the screen in search of the little red arrow that indicates the exit.

That said, this *is* coded by Griptonite, so there are enough cool touches to give the basic mechanics a bit of flare. Fundamentals first, though. A triple tap of A gives Daredevil a punchy combo, B looks after the jumps, and R has our crime fighter swishing his billy club about. Tap R, though, and you're treated to a nice photo-negative view of the world as Daredevil's heightened perceptions come into play. It doesn't allow you to do much more than locate invisible power-ups, but it *is* a break in style. As is the rolling level that sees our hero jumping across the roofs of moving vehicles – weirdly, this also features power-ups that match the speed of the traffic perfectly. There's also a juicy selection of 40 unlockables that feature movie clips and Marvel artwork, no hidden areas, no minigames and no reason to fork out unless you're a dedicated fan of the man in red.





△ Water-skiing is pad-sharftingly difficult.



△ Barrels feature heavily in *Rayman 3.*



△ The backgrounds are sumptuous to look at…

RAYMAN 3: HOODLUM HAVOC

INFO BURST

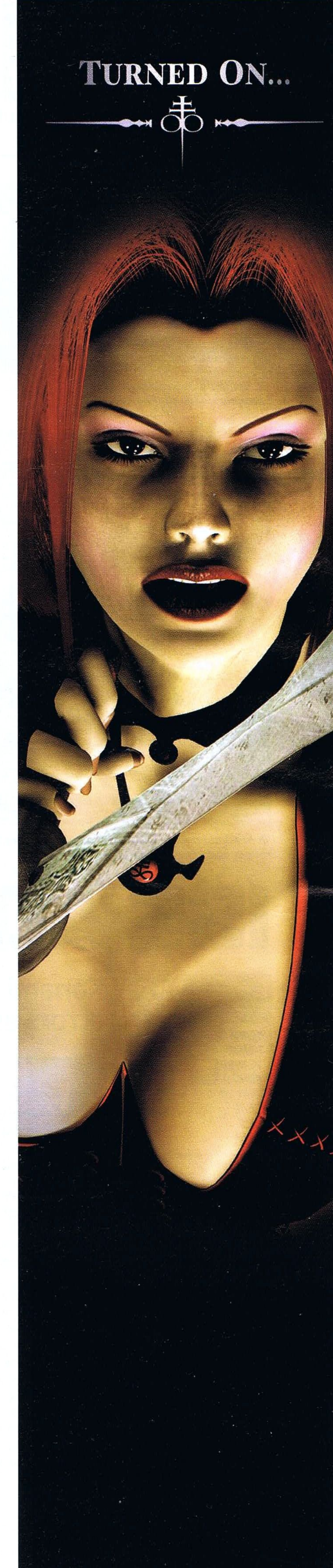
FORMAT	GBA
FROM	UBI SOFT
PLAYERS	1-4
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

The power of glove, or third-degree murder?

Like the recipe for scrambled eggs, *Rayman* hasn't changed its format for donkey's years. Your divot pal Globox is in trouble again, the Lums are back in their cages and it's up to you to rescue the little sh… shysters for a third time running. Incredibly, this *doesn't* mean that *R3* is a pile of steaming old dog logs.

The front end is mechanically convincing, but the layout of the levels isn't as straightforward as the screenshots here might have you believe. As with all platform heroes, Rayman's task is to get from A to B, but here there's no guarantee where B might actually be located. Up a climbable vine? Across a piranha-infested lake? On top of a floating flower head? There's a depth to level design that has you exploring every crevice in order to find first the Lums and then the way out. But for all the complexity in layout and sharpness of design, there's no getting away from the fact that there's little new going on in the foreground. Rayman does that thing with his hair, and that thing with his fist and – until you get two levels in and (hurrah!) uncover a water-skiing minigame – you'd be forgiven for thinking that you'd picked up *Rayman 2* by accident. Easy to get into, easy to master and just as easily forgotten among the masses of other platformers out there.





"It brings about a welcome shuffle to the standard platforming deck"



Use the new aiming gizmo then punt a cross into your waiting forwards.



Tap Select at any point during the match and you can quickly alter your rush tactics.



Cracking one home is one of the most difficult things to master in the game, thanks to the ball having some smart independent physics.

ISS ADVANCE



INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	KONAMI
PLAYERS	1-2
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Konami make up for past errors and curl in a beauty.



It's *the* football game to be seen playing. The last title on GBA did okay but was knackered by badly scaled players and, since this first *ISS*, we've had Steven Gerrard turning our heads. Question is then, has this got the moxie to take the crown?

On sheer detail and complexity of options, it's a yes. Three different weather settings, four different play modes, ten variations in formation and an incredibly detailed tactics screen that allows you to plan just about any play you fancy into the box. It's a beautiful take on the beautiful game, despite the fact that there are no licensed players and no means to edit names. Even the commentary (by a mini-Jon Champion) is pretty decent – although his shout of "danger here!" sounds weirdly like "engineer!".

It's out on the pitch, though, that you really learn to appreciate how well-structured this kicker is. There's no doubting the *ISS* style of play is a tough one to get your head around. It's all about well-timed combinations of runs on the ball, through-passes and double-tapped one-twos. Anyone weaned on a more direct style of play will have their work cut out for them – especially when it comes to accurate shots on goal. Stick with it, though, learn how best to manage your players' stamina and the rewards will truly outweigh the pain of a long run of nil-nil draws.





Muto has to locate four vital elements per level. Boxes are always a good starting place.



INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	MIDWAY
PLAYERS	1
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	NO
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	MARCH
COST	£30

DR MUTO

Be man AND mouse in Midway's body-popping platformer.

Another side-(yawn)-scrolling (zzzz) platformer (snuffle) with A TWIST! (Eh?) Ah, thought that'd jolt your interest. You see, Dr Muto isn't the kind of quack that wears a stethoscope and pats your tongue with a lollipop stick. No, no, no. He's a doctor of the 'mad science' variety, which means he can 'mutate' into four different forms, all of which have a direct influence on how you play. His mouse transformation allows him to enter small openings; by shifting into an ape or a spider he can cling to various ceilings; and finally, as a fish he can navigate a submerged tunnel.

It all combines to bring about a welcome shuffle to the standard platforming deck, and the fact that you're continually called upon to use more complex combinations of the creature types is evidence of some well-thought-out puzzleage. And then everything goes flat...

Combat is simplistic, as attacks take down even the toughest of enemies with the minimum of fuss. Opt for Muto in his human form, for instance, and there's very little that can stand up to your 'one zap kills everything' Splizz-gun.

But what really floors this is the fact that you really don't care about Muto as a character – even as that cute mousey. As such, you continually take more risks to keep playing down to gnat sized proportions.





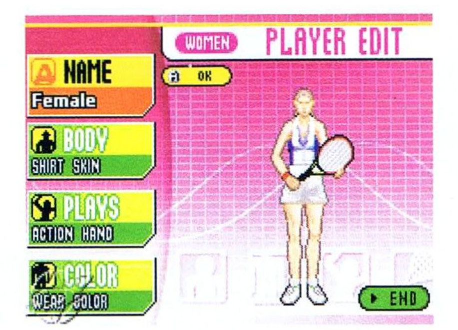
Many puzzles involve capturing Gomers.



The fish mutation is a definite highlight.



△ Minigames all the way in the career mode, as every skill is honed to perfection.





△ Four players via a link cable creates one of the most intensely competitive experiences on GBA.



△ The burger bar sees you trying to build an edible snack using nothing but targeting skills.



△ Aceing returns is all about anticipating which way your opponent will hit the ball.

VIRTUA TENNIS

Just when you thought there would never be a decent tennis sim for GBA this arrives and we fall in (Love-15).

INFO BURST

FORMAT	GBA
FROM	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-4
SINGLE-CART	
LINK UP	YES
SAVE	ON CART
OUT	NOW
COST	£30

Why should it always be such a revelation when great gameplay gets translated from the bigger consoles onto GBA? Great gameplay is great gameplay, regardless of size. Perhaps it's the result of so many good console titles receiving a half-arsed treatment at the hands of coders eager to cash in on licences… Mike knows we've seen enough of those in the past.

Thankfully, that isn't the case as far as *Virtua Tennis* is concerned. If you've seen this game in action anywhere else, then you'll know *exactly* what to expect here.

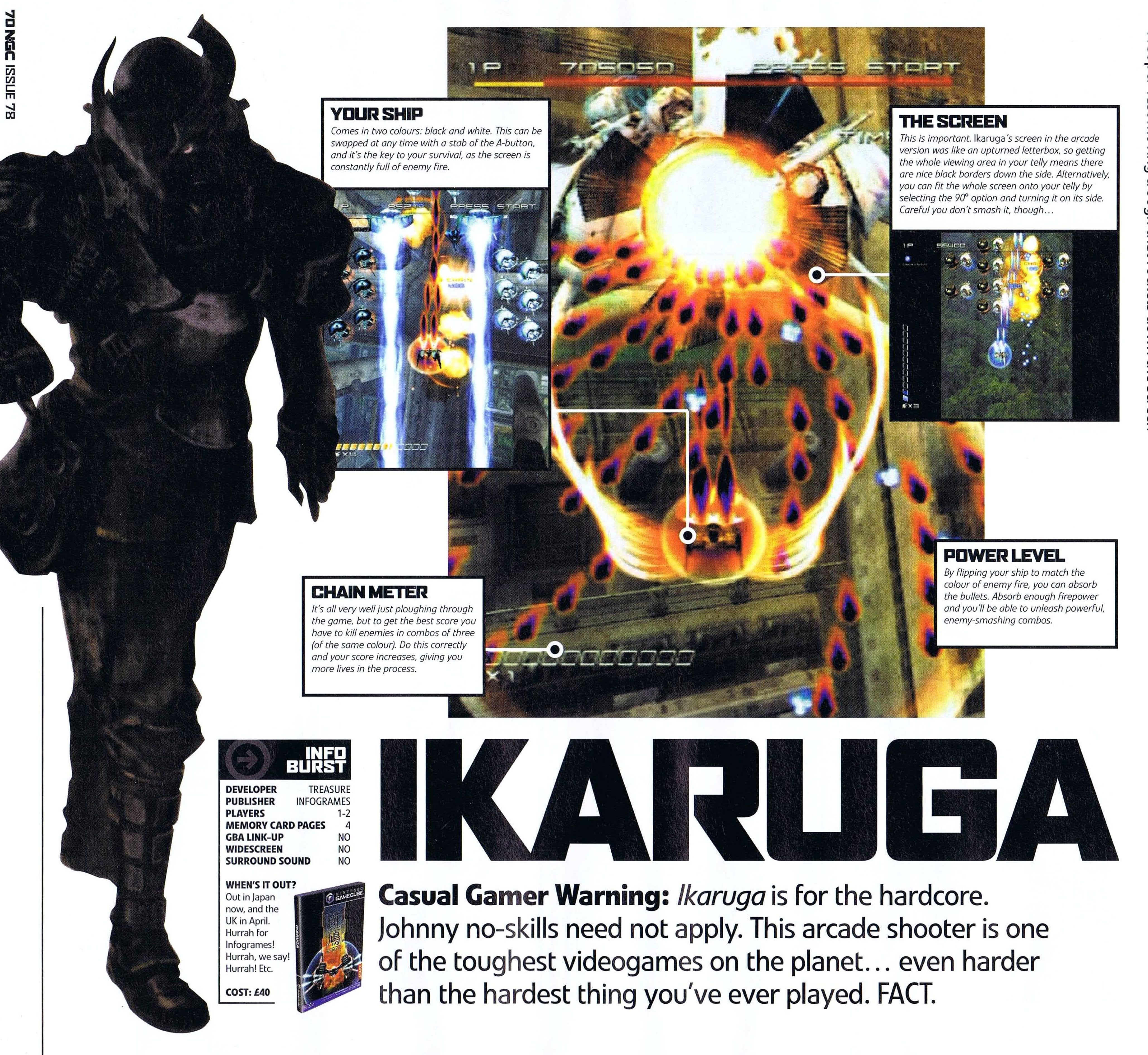
Twelve recognisable faces from the world circuit (although some, like the Williams sisters, are more recognisable than others – yes, that means you, Eddy Souw). Four difficulty settings and a totally comprehensive World Tour mode that includes a reasonably detailed character editing option, alongside a pleasing array of mini practice games to hone your skills against. The bonus is, it's an attention to detail that doesn't let up once you get out on the court. True, your choice of shots is fairly limited by there only being just the two action buttons on the GBA. But, mix these up with a press forward for a follow through, or a pull back for a drop shot, and you'll still have your opponents flailing on the tramlines.

> **"THE TRUE BRILLIANCE OF THIS SHINES THROUGH AS SOON AS YOU GET YOUR MATES ROUND"**

As with any other incarnation of this title, though, the true brilliance shines through whenever you get enough mates together to unearth the full potential of the multiplayer. This game's about coming together, dominating each other, and learning to hate. Utter genius.



DID YOU KNOW? The earliest recorded record of tennis is in the Bayeux Tapestry, in which Saladin of Constantinople did drub St Francis the Bald 6-4, 6-2, 7-6 in the 1065 Norman Open.



YOUR SHIP

Comes in two colours: black and white. This can be swapped at any time with a stab of the A-button, and it's the key to your survival, as the screen is constantly full of enemy fire.

THE SCREEN

This is important. Ikaruga's screen in the arcade version was like an upturned letterbox, so getting the whole viewing area in your telly means there are nice black borders down the side. Alternatively, you can fit the whole screen onto your telly by selecting the 90° option and turning it on its side. Careful you don't smash it, though…

POWER LEVEL

By flipping your ship to match the colour of enemy fire, you can absorb the bullets. Absorb enough firepower and you'll be able to unleash powerful, enemy-smashing combos.

CHAIN METER

It's all very well just ploughing through the game, but to get the best score you have to kill enemies in combos of three (of the same colour). Do this correctly and your score increases, giving you more lives in the process.

IKARUGA

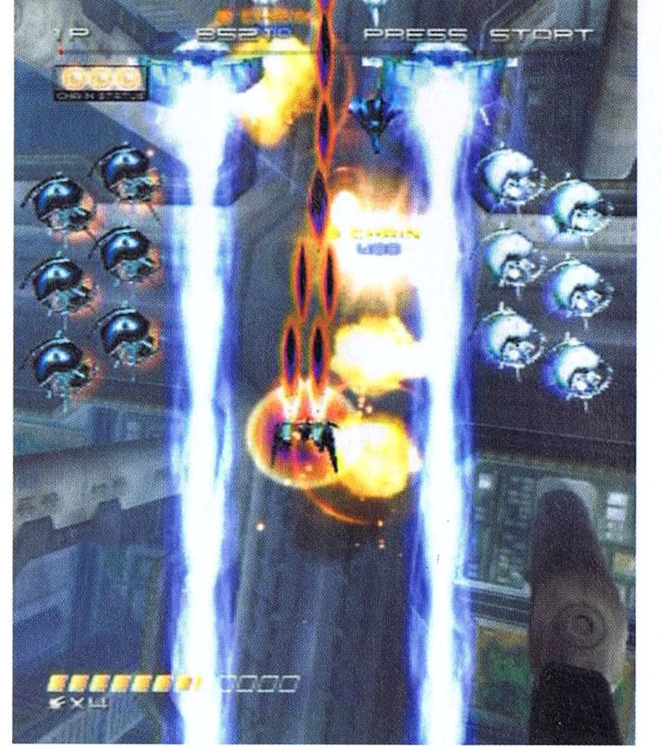
Casual Gamer Warning: *Ikaruga* is for the hardcore. Johnny no-skills need not apply. This arcade shooter is one of the toughest videogames on the planet… even harder than the hardest thing you've ever played. FACT.

INFO BURST

DEVELOPER	TREASURE
PUBLISHER	INFOGRAMES
PLAYERS	1-2
MEMORY CARD PAGES	4
GBA LINK-UP	NO
WIDESCREEN	NO
SURROUND SOUND	NO

WHEN'S IT OUT?
Out in Japan now, and the UK in April. Hurrah for Infogrames! Hurrah, we say! Hurrah! Etc.

COST: £40



△ You can tap the fire for a single shot or hold it for a double. Mastering this kind of subtlety to the controls is how you improve combo accuracy.

△ Absorb these massive energy beams to keep powered up…



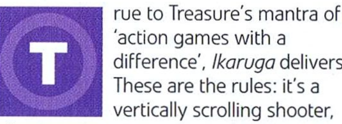


△ To maximise damage, either unleash powered homing lasers or use the opposite colour lasers to the enemy you're shooting – doubling attack power

△ The bosses are wonderfully imaginative and hard as hell.

True to Treasure's mantra of 'action games with a difference', *Ikaruga* delivers. These are the rules: it's a vertically scrolling shooter, where your ship can change between two colours – black and white. You fire lasers corresponding to your ship's colour – the enemies come in the same two colours, firing projectiles of the corresponding colour. If your ship is the same colour as the projectiles it gets hit by, it absorbs them. By absorbing fire, you build up a meter that can discharge a stream of homing-lasers at multiple targets. Running underneath this premise is the chain-combo system. If you shoot enemies of the same colour and continue to do so without breaking the chain, your score will sky-rocket.

It's not that simple, of course. The screen is constantly charged with enemy units and fire. You'll need to constantly flip your craft between colours not only to keep your high-scoring chain-combo, but simply to survive, which requires intense concentration. Over the game's five levels, the difficulty rises exponentially. The third level, for example, is a super-fast moving trough that rockets down the screen. As solid walls charge towards you (as well as a constant downpour of enemies) you'll feel your brain leaking out of your ears, as its puny processing power fails to comprehend how you're supposed to deal with it all. *Ikaruga* is the kind of game that makes you feel like a quivering incompetent. It's *seriously* tough – but never unfairly so. You see, the more you play, the easier it is to get your head around. Sections of the game that felt utterly impossible soon begin to crystalise in your mind. Your reactions vastly improve, and the back of your strengthening brain pushes you to have another go because it knows you can do it better.



"YOU NEED TO CONSTANTLY FLIP YOUR CRAFT BETWEEN COLOURS SIMPLY TO SURVIVE"

This is one of the most expertly crafted examples of a creaky old genre. It mightn't be as rounded an experience as Treasure's own *Radiant Silvergun*, but this spiritual sequel is as close as anyone's ever likely to get to such stripped-down brilliance. Except Treasure themselves, of course.

GERAINT EVANS

+
- Very hard.
- Brilliantly designed.

–
- Only five levels.
- Flip your telly 90°

IF YOU LIKE THIS...
Gradius
Nintendo
NGC/63 90%
A lovely shooter. It sits in the palm of your hand. Buy it.

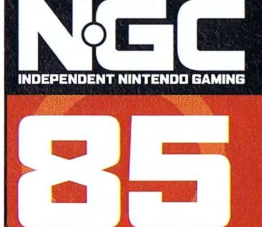
8 VISUALS
Stunning 3D backdrops and a selection of superb bosses.

8 SOUNDS
Appropriately rousing music and mad robot voices.

7 MASTERY
Only a shoot-'em-up, but it's a brilliantly designed one.

7 LIFESPAN
Five tough levels and some great extra modes.

VERDICT
Not to everyone's tastes, but an amazing example of the genre.



FIVE FOR A PRIZE!

Of course, we could easily sit around all day making Top 5 lists, like crazed list-addicted John Cusack. In fact, we often do. But, as ever, we want YOU to do the work now. You've seen the format over the past few months, so send in your own Top 5 lists. If we use yours, you might win something 'interesting'... Good luck, children! Mwahahaha...

STEVE JALIM'S TOP FIVE SWEETS

The elusive Steven Nicodemus Jalim, erstwhile production editor of **NGC** and world-class confectionery expert, introduces a hand-picked quintet of fine sweetmeats, and how long it usually takes him to eat them...



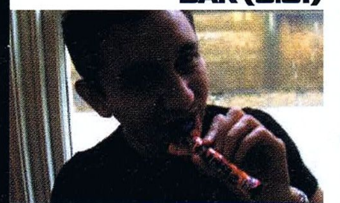
HARIBO TANGFASTIC (0:10)



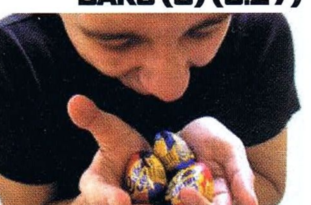
HARIBO STARMIX (0:20)



CADBURY'S CHOMP BAR (0:01)



CADBURY'S FUDGE BARS (5) (0:27)



CADBURY'S CREME EGGS (0:05)

NGC ESSENTIAL

THE BEST CUBE GAMES MONEY CAN BUY...



1 METROID PRIME

NINTENDO ■ NGC/76 **96**

If you asked us a year ago where we thought *Metroid Prime* was going to rank on the list, we'd have scoffed cynically. As it turned out, the beleaguered Retro were shoved back on course by the guiding hand of Shigsy to create Gamecube's best game so far. Pushes the envelope in every field to produce a polished, eminently playable, stunningly immersive shooter that will make you cry when it's over. Classic.



2 SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE



NINTENDO ■ NGC/73 **96**

The wait may have been long, but by Mike was it worth it. This time, Mazza's cleaning up oily muck on a tropical island put there by an evil villain. With the same intuitiveness, polished visuals, and sense of pure fun, this pushes all the right buttons.

3 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE



NINTENDO ■ NGC/68 **95**

Eye-singeing multiplayer battles, ingenious moves, brilliant cameo appearances from about every Nintendo character ever, plus some of the sweetest looks yet squeezed from the Cube – *Smash Bros* is everything you went purple for and more.

4 TIMESPLITTERS 2





EIDOS ■ NGC/73 **92**

A stonker of a time-travelling FPS with more than a whiff of *GoldenEye*, *TS2* crept out of nowhere to officially become Gamecube's finest example of the genre – and with *Perfect Dark* destined for the Bill Box, it looks as if it's here to stay.

5 WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM



NINTENDO ■ NGC/67 **91**

In PAL form this sodden sequel might suffer from some *tiny* frame-rate problems, but it's still a fabulous racer, replete with *the* most incredible water effects ever. Fast, dynamic, accessible and sublime to control, *Wave Race* is absolute magic.

6 LUIGI'S MANSION





NINTENDO ■ NGC/67 **90**

Mazza might have been late to the party this time round, but brother Luigi managed to ease the pain with this fantastically playable combination of *Super Mario World* and Ghostbusters. It's maybe a bit short, but still ace.

7 RESIDENT EVIL





CAPCOM ■ NGC/72 **89**

The classic zombie-horror fear-fest recreated to take advantage of the Cube's superior electrical witchcraft. Stunning, mesmerising visuals, unrivalled atmosphere and a brilliant storyline. Shame it still has the old-fashioned rotate-and-shoot control system from the dark PSone days, mind...

8 ETERNAL DARKNESS





NINTENDO ■ NGC/74 **89**

A rollicking Lovecraftian yarn of ancient evils coming home to roost that more than gives *Resi* a run for its money. *ED* replaces slick zombie-slaying action with a wonderfully creepy story told through a cast of 12 playable characters, and a truly innovative magic system. Get this one in...

9 SUPER MONKEY BALL





SEGA ■ NGC/67 **88**

Ingenious update of *Marble Madness*, with simians rolling around strange landscapes trying to collect 'nanas. Chuck in a monkey version of *Mario Kart*, pool, some golf and a tilting boxing ring with springy boxing gloves and you've got the weirdest, most wonderful Gamecube game out.

10 STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER







ACTIVISION ■ NGC/68 **87**

One of the best-looking console games ever made (well, so far), *Rogue Leader* also happens to be one of the slickest, most memorable Star Wars games of all time, bolting eye-popping renditions of the Battle of Hoth and the Trench Run onto silky smooth space battles. Get it in now.

11 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 3





ACTIVISION ■ NGC/67 **87**

It's clearly a no-brainer of a PS2 conversion, but *Tony Hawk's 3* is so good it hardly seems to matter. Packed with unbelievable grinds and stunts, backed up by a mountain of hidden extras, and benefiting from vast skate parks, if you haven't tried *Hawk's* on for size before, now's the time.

12 SSX TRICKY





EA SPORTS ■ NGC/69 **87**

Like *Tony Hawk's*, this has got PS2 written all over it in big, fat neon letters, but it still manages to perform wonders with your Cube. Fast, spectacular courses, brilliant shortcuts and secrets and some timely mid-piste scrappage make this conversion brilliant, *brilliant* entertainment.

13 BURNOUT





ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67 **86**

On the N64, we had to wait three years for a driving game. Now we've got a killer racer from day one: with lightning-fast, spectacular crashes, inch-perfect handling and one of the smoothest, most impressive engines around, *Burnout* is a dream of a game, even if it's over a bit quickly.

14 LOST KINGDOMS





ACTIVISION ■ NGC/70 **86**

Nerdy CCG-ing comes to the Cube in this surprisingly accomplished RPG, in which you collect cards and battle mythical monsters in pretty fantasy landscapes. Might not sound like much, but *Lost Kingdoms* is far more than the sum of its parts. Try it and you just might get hooked.

15 PIKMIN



NINTENDO ■ NGC/69 **85**

Dreamily created using textures from Shigsy's own garden, *Pikmin* is a genius real-time strategy with multi-coloured vegetables, beautifully simple controls and expansive, tactile worlds. It's over a bit quickly if truth be told, but don't let that put you off: this is Nintendo brilliance.

16 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4



ACTIVISION ■ NGC/75 **85**

The world's only skateboarder to be eligible for a Senior Citizen's Railcard (he's 35 this May…) stars in yet another boarding game. No time limits (hurrah!) and some great RPG elements and minigames complement the larger areas – a sterling refinement of an already classic series. Top hole, dude!

17 EXTREME G 3







ACCLAIM ■ NGC/67 **85**

A bit of an underrated gem, *Extreme G 3* offers pulse-shattering speed, huge, sprawling, well-designed tracks, some ingenious – and surprisingly tactical – weaponry and eye-spanking visuals. It's a tiny bit soulless, and the multiplayer's somewhat rank, but this is good stuff.

18 ISS 2



KONAMI ■ NGC/68 **83**

This once-untouchable football giant makes its debut on Gamecube sporting a few nasty cuts and bruises, including a lack of pace, huge turning circles and 'sweet spots'. Even so, it still rates as a majestic example of footie in a disc, even though an *ISS* with faults is hard to stomach.

19 FIFA 2003



EA ■ NGC/75 **83**

Who woulda thunk it? The year Konami slip up with a below-par *ISS* also happens to be the one where EA pull a version of *FIFA* that's actually smooth, playable and well put-together. Okay, so they both got the same mark, but by EA's past 'efforts' this is top-notch gimmick-free footie action.

20 TIGER WOODS PGA TOUR 2003





EA ■ NGC/75 **82**

Cablinasian golf robot Tiger Woods gets his own game – perhaps surprisingly, it's pretty good, too. With its slick visuals, masses of game modes, and plenty of lush fairways and greens to play on, *Mario Golf* is going to have its work cut out. The best spoiled walk on Gamecube by a country mile.

TOP TEN GBA GAMES

1 ADVANCE WARS
A cute-looking turn-based strategy game it may be, but underneath is a frighteningly addictive, super-challenging masterpiece that'll hook anyone experiencing it. Frankly, one of the best games we've played.

2 SUPER MARIO ADVANCE 2
This slightly tweaked version of the SNES classic boasts a massive game world and some of the tightest, most perfect level designs ever conceived. Stone-cold classic gaming.

3 YOSHI'S ISLAND
Stunning level design, fiendish puzzles and secrets all topped off with some beautiful pastel-shaded visuals. Another essential 2D platformer for GBA.

4 SUPER MARIO KART ADVANCE
Playing very much like the superb SNES original, you have to burn around multi-coloured tracks, dishing out justice with weapons. An excellent multiplayer title.

5 STREET FIGHTER ALPHA 3
An incredible conversion of one of the best fighters ever. A massive single-player, a brilliant two-player experience, and a wealth of other great modes. Unmissable.

6 BROKEN SWORD
A perfect handheld title for those long journeys. A gripping storyline, sharp, sarcastic dialogue, some sweet visuals and a more efficient control scheme. A great little adventure.

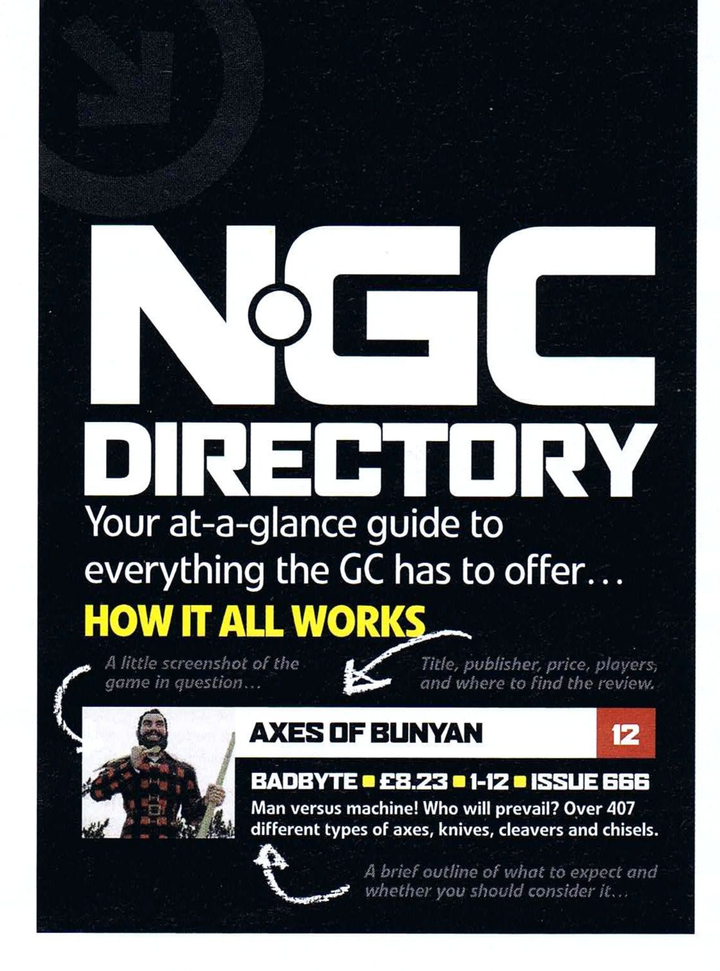
7 CASTLEVANIA HARMONY OF DISSONANCE
A little more accessible than its previous GBA outing, this has all the hallmarks of a classic *'Vania* title. Imaginative bosses, a steep challenge and highly atmospheric.

8 BALLISTIC ECKS VS SEVER 2
Hands down, the best FPS on GBA. An incredible technical achievement (given all of its effects), this is both easier on the eye and far more engaging than *Doom*.

9 GRADIUS ADVANCE
The best shooter available for GBA, and it's doubtful many will ever get close. Classic *Gradius* gameplay, with innovative levels and fantastic bosses.



10 GOLDEN SUN
A beautiful little RPG that, while a little clichéd, has a lovely story accompanying some genuinely innovative touches and smart dungeon design.



NGC DIRECTORY

Your at-a-glance guide to everything the GC has to offer...

HOW IT ALL WORKS



2002 FIFA WORLD CUP — 30

EA ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69
About as much fun as being told your parents have been crushed to death in a horrific car crash.



ACE GOLF — 74

EIDOS ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74
Enjoyable, relaxing sticksie-ball game that treads the middle-ground between fun and serious.



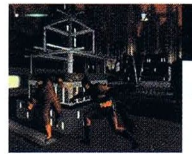
ATV QUAD POWER RACING 2 — 70

ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 77
Wave Race on land with bouncy farming vehicles. Competent enough, but there's better out there.



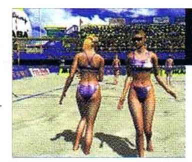
BARBARIAN — 70

VIRGIN ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72
A button-mashing fantasy battler. Fun for a while – but it's not as good as *Smash Bros.*



BATMAN VENGEANCE — 70

UBI SOFT ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67
Platforming cartoon bat-action. One of the first Cube games – looking pretty ropey already.



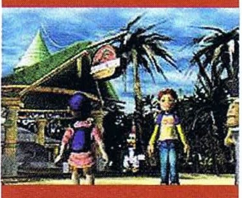
BEACH SPIKERS — 79

SEGA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72
Brilliantly addictive with four players, but the single-player's longevity lets the side down.

TOP FIVE STINKERS




JEREMY MCGRATH'S SUPERCROSS WORLD
(Nearly) the worst game on Gamecube.



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS
Pick up trash for eternity while being tormented by Woody Woodpecker. Less a game, more a convincing depiction of some private hell.



GAUNTLET DARK LEGACY
Awful update that's nothing short of a dim-witted insult to the legacy of its venerable arcade forbear. Boo!



MICKEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR
Condescending 'educational' title starring The Mouse.



BIG AIR FREESTYLE
Another execrable bike game. Brown, jaggy and boring, with stunts defying Newton's Second Law of Motion.



BIG AIR FREESTYLE — 28

INFOGRAMES ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
The kind of game that makes you want to cry the second you've started playing. Don't bother...



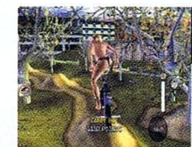
BLOOD OMEN 2: LEGACY OF KAIN — 72

EIDOS ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 77
Gamecube's other undead hack-fest. Evil vampire lord Kain is awake and hungry: breakfast, anyone?



BLOODY ROAR: PRIMAL FURY — 74

ACTIVISION ■ £35 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Competent-enough fighter, but *Capcom Vs SNK* and *Mortal Kombat* have since surpassed it.



BMX XXX — 48

ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 76
Childish BMX game featuring strippers showing you their nipples. Get a girlfriend instead.



BOMBERMAN GENERATIONS — 70

VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 76
The single-player is enjoyable if a little tedious – four-player mode is as addictive as it ever was.



CAPCOM VS SNK 2 — 79

CAPCOM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72
A great game, but purists will want to buy a decent arcade stick to get the most from it...



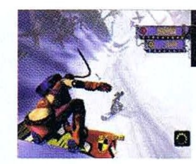
CEL DAMAGE — 60

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 66
Silly cel-shaded car combat game that's far too manic and confusing for its own good.



CRASH BANDICOOT: THE WRATH OF CORTEX — 40

VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75
One of the worst ports we've seen – of a game that was a stinking load of crap to begin with. Avoid.



DARK SUMMIT — 51

THQ ■ £35 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 69
Think *SSX Tricky* but with all the speed, style and entertainment taken out of it. A waste of time.



DAVE MIRRA 2 — 75

ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 67
Not bad at all. Slick and smooth with big arenas – but this will only appeal to the BMX hardcore.



TOP FIVE FOOTBALL GAMES

FIFA 2003
What the holy heck? FIFA comes good at last with a smooth, playable kickabout that just might surprise you.

ISS 2
Not the best *ISS* by a long stretch, with added slooowness and huge turning circles. Still got it where it counts, though.

RED CARD 20-03
Sharpen your studs fora game of football played like it was originally intended. Bewilderingly, fully endorsed by FIFA.

SEGA SOCCER SLAM
Cartoon three-a-side novelty leg-scraper with 'ker-ayzee' themed pitches and comedy international stereotypes.

DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL
Surprisingly solid (thought basic) footie game. Shame there aren't more actual Disney characters in it…



DIE HARD: VENDETTA — 80
VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74
Wear a vest and shoot holes in people who look like terrorists in Gamecube's sweariest game!



DISNEY SPORTS FOOTBALL — 69
KONAMI ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 76
Oddly enough, this isn't that bad. It's an amusing, simple footie game, ideal for younger gamers.



DONALD DUCK GOIN' QUACKERS — 32
UBI SOFT ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 68
A bit like *Crash Bandicoot*, except with a duck in a sailor's costume. Oh, and it's also rubbish.



DOSHIN THE GIANT — 62
NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74
Quirky title that puts you in charge of a giant who must help indigenous islanders. A little short-lived.



DRIVEN — 60
BAM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Very basic, very short game of the appalling film. Filling up bargain bins worldwide as we speak.



EGGO MANIA — 49
KEMCO ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72
Rubbish take on *Tetris* that wouldn't look out of place on an Amiga. Pointless in every way.



ESPN 2002 WINTER SPORTS — 37
KONAMI ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 67
Winter sports game combining button-mashing with timing and precision exercises. Very dull.



F1 2002 — 67
EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 71
Rock-hard driving simulator your dad will enjoy. Features German driving robot M Schumacher.



FIREBLADE — 59
MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 77
Nondescript brain-free helicopter game that will appeal to military memorabilia-collecting psychos.



GAUNTLET: DARK LEGACY — 25
MIDWAY ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 68
We'd be far more comfortable with this travesty if we'd had it inserted rectally. Utterly despicable.



GODZILLA: DESTROY ALL MONSTERS MELEE — 68
INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74
Lots of good stompy fun in multiplayer, but otherwise a little weak. Get *Smash Bros* instead.



HARRY POTTER AND THE CHAMBER OF SECRETS — 78
EA ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76
Attractive and decent enough adaptation of the film – but rather easy. Only Potter fans need apply.



HOT WHEELS: VELOCITY X — 45
THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
Very basic racing/car-combat game based on the toys. Strictly for the very, very young.



JAMES BOND 007: NIGHTFIRE — 72
EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
The best Bond game on GC so far, but tasty visuals can't hide an FPS that's a little lacking overall.



JEDI KNIGHT II — 67
ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
A very disappointing PC conversion of an overrated shooter. Huge game, but quite tedious.



JEREMY MCGRATH SUPERCROSS WORLD — 20
ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 69
Like a horrible nightmare about doing cross-country wearing nothing but wire-wool pants…



KELLY SLATER'S PRO SURFER — 75
ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 73
Same old trick-based extreme sporting, but this time in water. Actually quite good fun, for a while.



KNOCKOUT KINGS — 79
EA ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75
If the more arcadey nature of *Rocky* doesn't sit too well with you, then it's worth giving this a go.



LEGENDS OF WRESTLING — 47
ACCLAIM ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69
The gimmick of bringing back old-skool wrestlers is nowhere near enough to make this any good.



LEGENDS OF WRESTLING II — 50
ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 76
See above. A travesty of a wrestling game, made only marginally better thanks to Big Daddy.

DID YOU KNOW? Walt Disney was supposedly rubbish at drawing. He had to get one of his artists to teach him to scrawl Mickey Mouse in the same pose, for when kids asked him for his autograph.

DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!



MARIO PARTY 4 — 68

NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Disappointing. It's not bad for party fun, but it's done nothing to improve on the originals.



MAT HOFFMAN'S PRO BMX 2 — 70

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75

Another decent enough extreme sports sim. Slicker than *Dave Mirra*, but with smaller, tighter arenas.



MEDAL OF HONOR: FRONTLINE — 74

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

FPS set during WWII. Looks rather ropey in places, but it's atmospheric and highly enjoyable.



MICKEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR — 26

DISNEY ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 73

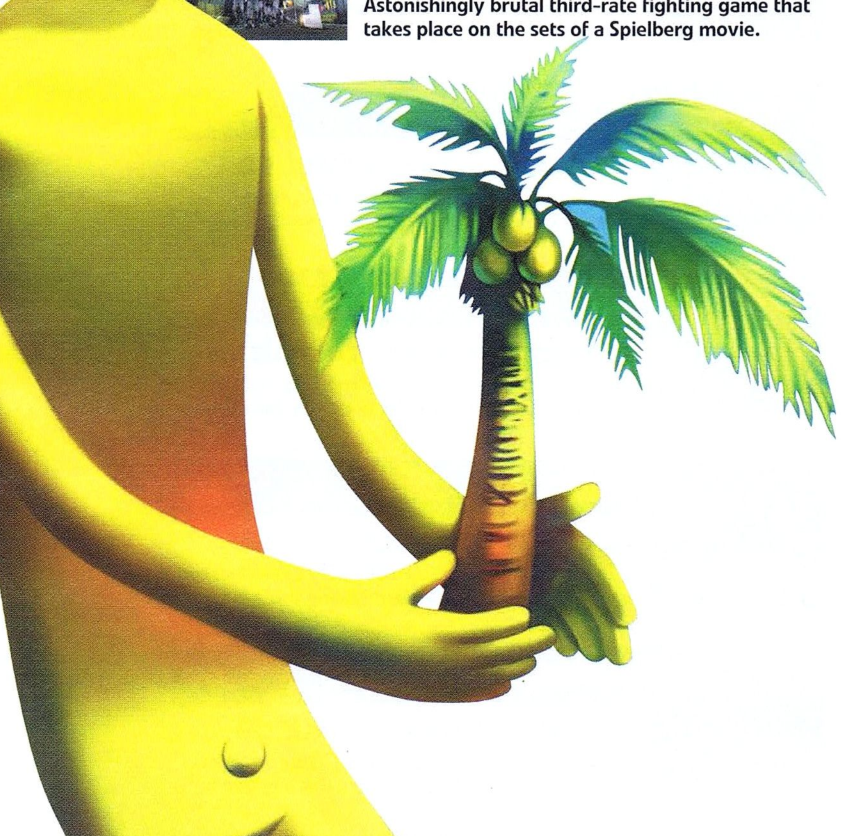
A cruel form of torture as Mickey patronises his way through this hideous adventure. Rubbish.



MINORITY REPORT — 39

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 77

Astonishingly brutal third-rate fighting game that takes place on the sets of a Spielberg movie.





MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE — 80

MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 77

The best *Kombat* yet! The spine-ripping yarn gets the update it deserves on Gamecube. Finish him!



MX SUPERFLY — 63

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 73

An MX game that handles like you're racing on the moon. The best of a very bad bunch, though.



MYSTIC HEROES — 71

THQ ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Simplistic, repetitive 3D *Gauntlet*-style slash-'em-up that's strangely entertaining and charming.



NBA LIVE 2003 — 70

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

The best basketball sim available, but it's still lacking somewhat. Strictly for fans only.



NEED FOR SPEED 2 — 69

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

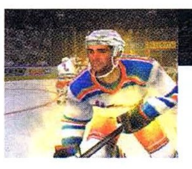
Slow and sluggish. Yet another lazy port that's ruined what was originally very entertaining.



NHL 2003 — 64

EA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

A more realistic approach to ice hockey which, while decent enough, isn't particularly fast or fun.



NHL HITZ 20-03 — 65

MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74

More frantic than EA's effort and a lot better for it. Not much change from the original, though.



PRO RALLY 2002 — 58

UBI SOFT ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

An okay game completely dragged down by its awful, frustrating handling. Leave well alone.



PRO TENNIS WTA TOUR — 48

KONAMI ■ £35 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74

As bland an experience as you could get, with unresponsive controls and po-faced women. Dull.



RED CARD 20-03 — 78

MIDWAY ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 71

Violent football game where you mince opponents until the meat shows, Roy Keane style.

TOP FIVE TOP FIVES



SANDWICHES

ISSUE 59

Ham & Pickle; Turkey Breast; Jam (strawberry); Ham & Coleslaw; Corned Beef



THINGS TO DO WITH A JOYPAD

ISSUE 58

Control pet; Wield Kung-Fu style; Comb hair; Wear as 'funky medallion'; Drag outside saying 'keep up, Trixie!'



BUTTOCKS

ISSUE 57

Uga Buga (Conker's Bad Fur Day); Ass Man (WWF Smackdown!); Ebisamaru (Goemon); Skull Kid (Zelda: MM), Strippers (Duke Nukem)



FATTIES

ISSUE 47

Snorlax (Pokémon); Cartman (South Park); Chunky Kong (DK64); Purlin (Turok 3); WizPig (Diddy Kong Racing)



WRETCHED N64 GAMES

VARIOUS ISSUES

Carmageddon 64 (8%); MK Mythologies (9%); Aero Gauge (10%); Superman 64 (14%); Rampage 2/Gex: Deep Cover Gecko (22%)

James Temperton from the **Land of Email** wins a copy of *Top Gun* for GBA. Send us your address, fool!



Every Gamecube game ever… rated!



REIGN OF FIRE — 59

BAM ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76
A poor game of a bad film. Some nice ideas are ruined by dodgy in-game physics and controls.



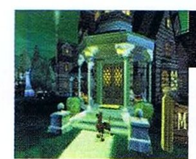
ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY — 77

TDK ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 77
Stompy king-size robots go to war in the game of the crazy Japanese cartoon. Not bad at all.



ROCKY — 78

RAGE ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74
A solid fighter based on the movies. With a great two-player and unlockable extras, it's a real treat.



SCOOBY DOO: NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS! — 36

THQ ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75
Generic platforming action that has nothing to hold your interest longer than half an hour. Pointless.



THE SCORPION KING — 30

VIVENDI ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75
Bad. Very bad. Guide a poor approximation of The Rock around and hit bad guys over and over.



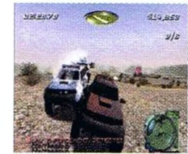
SEGA SOCCER SLAM — 67

SEGA ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 74
Footie with a focus on violence and OTT moves. Cracking in multiplayer – poor on your own.



THE SIMPSONS: ROAD RAGE — 52

EA ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
A bad *Crazy Taxi* clone with nothing more going for it than repetitive 'funny' one-liners.



SMUGGLER'S RUN — 78

ROCKSTAR ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73
impressive landscapes and fast-paced 'racing' are let down by repetitive gameplay and awful music.



SPIDER-MAN: THE MOVIE — 72

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 69
Dodgy control and camera issues are the only problems with this enjoyable platform adventure.



SPY HUNTER — 55

MIDWAY ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 68
Appalling frame-rate, nasty course design and dull linear racing make this one to avoid at all costs.

TOP FIVE UNDER-RATED GC GAMES

DIE HARD VENDETTA
Execute enemies of the USA with guns, then wash those dirty cuss-words out of your mouth.

DOSHIN THE GIANT
Perform deeds for the villagers? Or just stomp them to death under your giant yellow feet…

NFS 2: HOT PURSUIT
Not sure about this one…

STARFOX ADVENTURES
Real-time volumetrically-lit fur (*What? – Ed*) and stupid regional accents in Rare's last Ninty game.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Help the fragile anorexic plumbing brother rescue fat Mazza in a haunted house. One of these days, he's going to crack…

Olly Parry-Jones, also from the **Land of Email** wins a GBA game too, provided he sends us his fricking address…



SPYRO: ENTER THE DRAGONFLY — 40

VIVENDI ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 75
Much like *Crash*, this is another shoddy port of a game that wasn't much fun in the first place.



STARFOX ADVENTURES — 72

NINTENDO ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 74
Disappointing adventure that's way too easy and linear. Not awful, but should have been far better.



STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER — 68

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 77
The panting, pot-bellied hired gun gets the *Tomb Raider* treatment in this distinctly average game.



STAR WARS: THE CLONE WARS — 71

ACTIVISION ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75
Enjoyable blaster set around Episode II – not as good as *Rogue Leader*, but still fun all the same.



THE SUM OF ALL FEARS — 25

UBI SOFT ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76
So bad words can't describe it. The most technically inept game we've ever had the misfortune to play.



DIRECTORY

Every Gamecube game ever… rated!



TARZAN FREERIDE 59

UBI SOFT ■ £35 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67

Disney. Platformer. Do we really need to say any more? Workaday, unimaginative gameplay.



TAZ WANTED 52

INFOGRAMES ■ £40 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 72

Some of the worst level design we've ever seen in this middling, frustrating cel-shaded platformer.

TETRIS WORLDS 38

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

Again, THQ manage to ruin one of the best games ever by trying to make it 'better'. Get *Tetris DX*.



PAUL'S TOP SIX SENSE TALKS

THE PROPOSAL
"Imagine my head as a gigantic engine – but instead of producing horsepower, it produces Sense Talk. Sadly, there is also the waste product to consider…"

PAUL'S PIGS
"Buy a small pig, see, and then fatten it on old newspapers boiled in glue. Sell it at a profit, then repeat until you have all the pigs in the world. IN THE WORLD!"

THE EYEBROW
"If I was him, I'd do it all differently. All. You know, a blank canvas, and all that. Makes you think."

CAMPER VANS
"You want to be checking the end float before you buy that thing, mate. Nod's as good as a wink."

OLD COMPUTER PARTS
"When you think about it, they just 'don't compute'. They're old, no-one wants them, and they're really expensive. If computers were people, my gran would be worth a mint."

ROY SCHNEIDER
"You know that Roy Schneider? He was in Jaws, you know. That bit where Schneider shoots the air tank out of the shark's mouth? Brilliant!" *(Utter silence.)*



TOP GUN: COMBAT ZONES 71

VIRGIN ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 72

The only game of its kind on GC so far. It's pretty challenging, but we recommend you try it first.



TUROK EVOLUTION 71

ACCLAIM ■ £40 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 73

Rather disappointing dino-hunting FPS sequel. Okay, but serious niggles let the series down badly.



TY THE TASMANIAN TIGER 60

EA ■ £40 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 76

As mediocre a platformer as you'll find. It's a solid example of the genre but nothing more or less.



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS 24

KEMCO ■ £30 ■ 1 ■ ISSUE 67

Awful. Anyone who makes a game that has you picking up rubbish deserves to be shot in the face.



VIRTUA STRIKER 3 V2002 55

SEGA ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 69

Nice to look at, horrible to play. Rubbish AI and unwieldy controls make for a crap game of footie.



WORMS BLAST 63

UBI SOFT ■ £35 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 74

Kinda like *Bust-a-Move* in a puzzly-action kind of way, except this isn't anywhere near as good.



WRECKLESS: THE YAKUZA MISSIONS 51

ACTIVISION ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 75

Drive around like a lunatic and smash up cars and everything else that gets in your way. Nonsense.



WWE X8 70

THQ ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 72

Okay wrestler, but with nothing particularly new and a way-too-familiar engine. Still, if you must…



X-MEN: NEXT DIMENSION 55

ACTIVISION ■ £30 ■ 1-4 ■ ISSUE 75

Duller than dishwater. Fighting-by-numbers stuff that offers very little of interest.




ZOOCUBE 50

ACCLAIM ■ £30 ■ 1-2 ■ ISSUE 71

Insane puzzle game involving a rotating cube that sucks in orbiting animal parts and goes 'moo'.



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EXTENDED PLAY

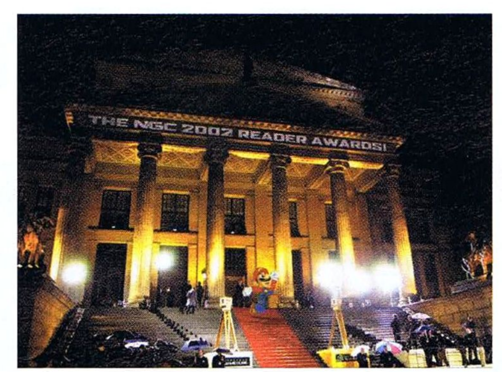
DEAD AGAIN



RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Send the dead back to where they came from with the first part of our tip-top walkthrough. P82

THE WINNER IS!



NGC 2002 AWARDS

Take your seats for the event of the year (well, last year). You voted, we reveal the results… P106

I'M THE BEST

Send abstract numbers in and see your name emblazoned in flames forever. Well, a few weeks. P96

COMPENDIUM

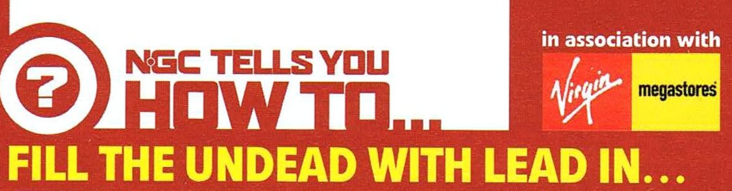
The last hurrah: Bicksy says hello in Talk Time, and Lex says goodbye the only way he can… P112

PLUS!

TIPS EXTRA

A giant bargeload of help to sail down your canal… this month, *Mortal Kombat*, *Capcom vs SNK* and pseudo-medical nonsense from Herr Doktor… P92

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FILL THE UNDEAD WITH LEAD IN...

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO



WHAT'S IT ALL ABOUT?

The prequel to the survival horror series, and a departure in that you can play both characters at the same time. Other than that, it's more or less about shooting shambling munters in the head until the white... meat... shows...

NORMAL MODE

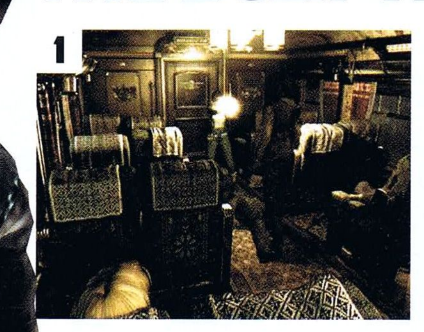
WHAT WE SAID IN ISSUE 76!

"Resident Evil Zero is a genuinely great game, but while it's introduced an excellent new two-character system, it's eliminated very few of the obvious flaws that have haunted the series. But you won't regret buying it"



85

THE ECLIPTIC EXPRESS


1



2

THE BILLY CLUB

The opening movie ends with Rebecca entering the east passenger car of the Ecliptic Express commuter train. The east door, leading to the dining car, is locked, so head west instead. Rebecca will make her first wary acquaintance with the humble-yet-omnipresent zombie **(1)**. These are a weaker sort than most of the undead you'll find in the game, however, and a mere eight to ten bullets should be enough to kill them all again. You'll receive a short movie as your reward.

If the fight left you injured, run up the stairs here to find a green herb in a hallway that is currently, thanks to a catastrophic caviar-spill, a dead-end. Also, while you're here, take note of the open window near the bottom of the stairs **(2)**, which you'll need in a bit.

Head west from here to the Sleeping Car. The first two doors you pass are unlocked, and contain many useful treasures; the first holds a box of handgun bullets and the Passenger's Diary file (if you should earn the Magnum on subsequent play-throughs of the game, it is also in this room), while the second is one of the few "safe rooms" in *Zero*. Here, you'll find a handy typewriter, a green herb, three ink ribbons, and the Investigation Orders file.



MONSTER! STINGER

This giant scorpion is intimidating, but it's easily dispatched once you recognise the pattern. Its only weak point is its head – a successful strike against its dome will frequently result in it covering itself with its claws, then bitch-slapping you across the room. While it does bleed if you shoot it in the body or claws, the Stinger is only appreciably injured by headshots. Back up against the door to the hallway, and wait for the Stinger to come to you. When it approaches, shoot or stab it once in the head, aiming downwards. It'll scream in pain and back off slightly. A moment later, it'll either rear up and try to strike you with its tail, or shamble back towards you. In either event, you can hurt it and get it to back off again by shooting it in the head. Repeat this pattern until the Stinger spasms and dies; this will require more shotgun shells than you have at the moment, fifteen to thirty handgun bullets, or a sobering number of knife jabs. The latter approach isn't for novices, but it does save quite a lot of ammo.



The Sleeping Car dead-ends with a pair of locked doors and a corpse leaning against the wall. One of these locked doors is the conductor's office; the other leads to the control room. Make a note of these locations, then ruthlessly pillage the corpse. You'll find the Train Key, which triggers a series of cut-scenes. Say "hello" to Billy Coen **(3)**, say "goodbye" to Edward Dewey, and say "die, dammit!" to a pair of zombie dogs.


3

These dogs, fortunately, aren't quite as tenacious as their counterparts in the first *Resident Evil* were; one to three bullets will knock them down, whereupon you can stand over them and shoot them to death. You'll only see one dog at first, but another will jump through the nearest window once you move away from Rebecca's starting position. When they're dead, search Edward for the bullets.

Head back east towards the dining car. If you just keep running, the fresh zombies in the passenger cars shouldn't get anywhere near you. Your new Train Key will unlock the dining car, where you'll meet back up with Billy **(4)** Post-argument, claim the Notice to Supervisors file from underneath the plant

MONSTER! LEECH CREATURE

It takes 16 bullets to kill the leech creature, during which time you'll probably take at least one long-distance pimp-slap from its amazing bendy arms. That only applies, of course, if you choose to fight it at all. You can achieve exactly the same results if, the moment you regain control of Rebecca, you quick-turn and run back downstairs. Remember: running away like a big nancy = extra ammo.



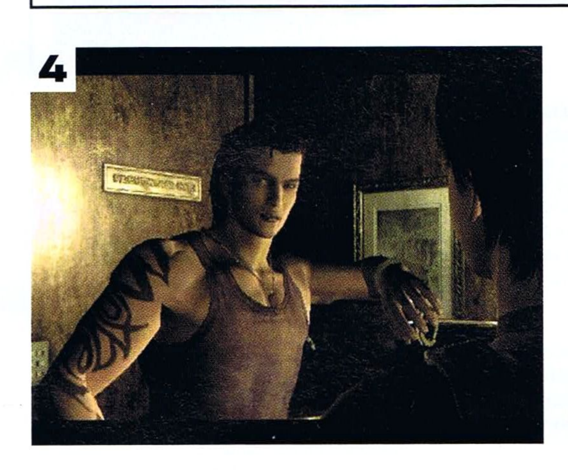
Make the dead even deader in part one of our tips spectacular…

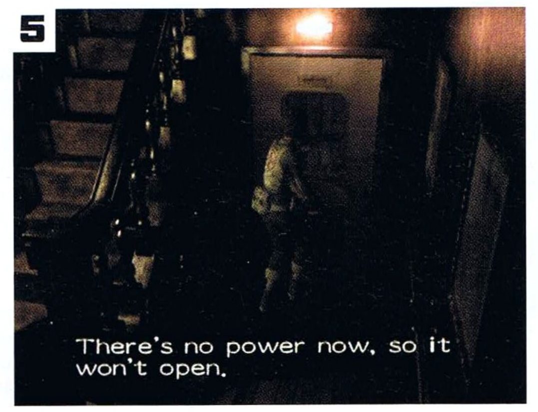














in the corner. The sliding door to the kitchen is currently out of commission **(5)**, so head upstairs to meet the Leech Creature…

Once the Leech Creature's 'dead,' Billy will give Rebecca 15 handgun bullets. Rebecca's agreement to work with Billy will also somehow generate, as though by magic, the Player's Manual 2 file, which will tell you all about the wild and wonderful world of character switching.

KITCHEN CONUNDRUM

Hit Start to split your characters up, leaving Billy in the dining car. Send Rebecca up the ladder at the back of the dining car **(6)** to the roof. Walk around the hole up here, and reconnect the power cable.

When you land in the kitchen, gather up the green herb, handgun bullets, and the Train Key **(7)**, then inspect the service lift in the corner. Put the Train Key into the lift and send it up. The door to the kitchen is currently jammed, and nothing you have in your inventory – even the eminently suitable combat knife that Billy is carrying – is going to unjam the lock. Rebecca's stuck for now.

Switch to Billy. First, you'll probably want to ditch the knife. Go downstairs; the reconnected power cable will have reactivated the door to the kitchen. The service lift is around the corner from the kitchen door, and when you open it, you'll find the Train Key.

Your newest key will grant you access to the conductor's office, near the front of the train. Head on back there, but be careful, as both passenger cars have filled back up with zombies. The west car can be cleared with a simple headlong dash, but the east car is a bit more problematic. You'll want to either deliberately let a zombie have a taste of Billy, then push the noshing shufflers down and run while they're prone, or, alternatively, just shoot a couple of them.

The conductor's office, when you reach it, is full of valuable prizes. A green herb and red herb (useless to Billy, but as mixable as ever for Rebecca) are on the windowsill, the Train Map is on the wall, and the Note from Conductor file is on the floor, amid the scattered papers. Most importantly, the gleaming red candy-like switch on the wall **(8)** will cause a ladder to drop down when pressed, and you'll find a locked briefcase inside the closet.

Climb the ladder to reach the train's bar. It's currently empty, save for the wily and vicious roving cut-scene. When that passes, leave via the bar's front door, across the room, to find an ice pick on a beverage cart **(9)**. The hall dead-ends at another messy mass of slimy leeches (mmm), but you can still get into a handy passenger cabin. This place was clearly inhabited by an unabashed firearms enthusiast, as there are supplies aplenty here; you can find a double-sized box of handgun bullets, some shotgun shells, a first-aid spray (use it as you see fit; first-aid sprays will not penalise your final ranking in this game, unlike in *Resident Evil 2* and *Code: Veronica*), an ink ribbon, and a double-barrelled hunting gun. (The closet in the corner that's equipped with a "special lock" cannot be opened on your first trip through the game, though…)

Now is an excellent time to rearrange your items a bit. Take the hunting gun, your handgun, a bit of spare ammunition, and perhaps the first-aid spray. You'll need to be prepared, because when you attempt to pass back through the bar (with the ice pick in hand), you will immediately be confronted by the Stinger…

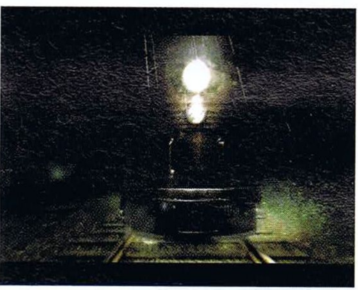


PUZZLE! EMERGENCY BRAKE

This is simple arithmetic, complicated slightly by the presence of the timer. You have a numeric keypad, and ten steps in which to reach the number on the screen. Remember your algebra. If y is your target number, then y represents the first nine steps in your equation and z is the final digit of the code. Your formula is, therefore, $9y + z = x$. So, if you need to reach 36, (as in the screenshot), you'll hit the 3 key nine times ($3 \times 9 = 27$), then the 9 key ($27 + 9 = 36$). When you're using it to kill zombies, even maths can be fun! When this console is activated, you'll be switched back to the other character, who has a similar puzzle to solve. Success will stop the train and end this chapter.



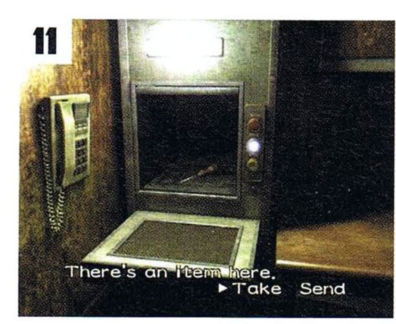




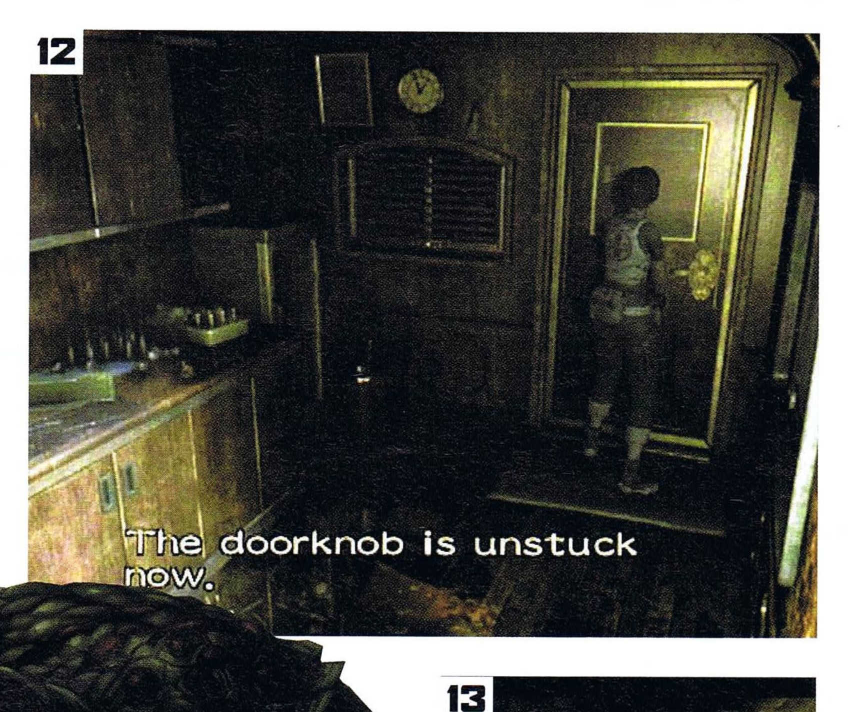
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11



12



13



DOG DEAD AFTERNOON

The Stinger's arrival has completely destroyed the bar, and, undoubtedly, its life-giving cache of frosty lager. Wipe away a tear and move on, but be sure to acquire the panel opener **(10)** from the floor before you leave. You may wish to drop Billy's handgun here, as well as whatever bullets you have left over; instead, be sure that you bring the ice pick, panel opener, and briefcase back downstairs with you.

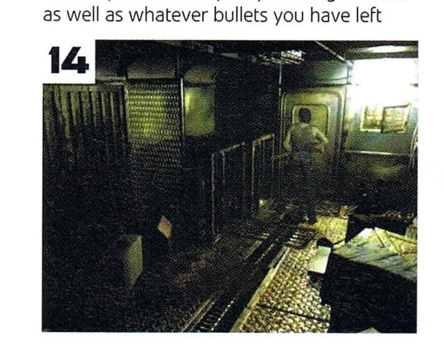
Thus equipped, return to the kitchen and send Rebecca the ice pick via the service lift **(11)**. She may use it on the door to unjam the lock **(12)** Leaving, Rebecca will wind up on the second floor of the dining car, where a flaming zombie has appeared (that wouldn't be a bad name for a sufficiently potent mixed drink). Simply avoid it and go downstairs to meet back up with Billy.

Thus reunited, give the healthier of your two characters the hunting gun, briefcase, and panel opener. The latter item can be used to open a steel grate on the floor of the kitchen **(13)**, and reveal a crawlspace. Split your characters up and send whoever has the hunting gun through the crawlspace into the freight car, where two undead dogs are on the prowl. A shotgun shell each should do them in, whereupon you'll be free to loot. The nearby shelves hold a gas tank, a first-aid spray, and a box of seven shotgun shells. There's also a gold ring on the floor of one of the cages **(14)**. You can combine the ring with the briefcase immediately to free up an item slot.

Unlatch the door to the freight car so your other character can come through, then proceed west, to the back end of the train. Out here, you'll find a release lever on the rail, as well as a hookshot, freshly stolen from *A Link To the Past*, fastened to the wall. Shuffle your characters' items around until one of them has two free item slots, then position that character in front of the hookshot. The other character should be stationed in front of the release lever. Pull the release lever **(15)**, then switch characters with the X-button and immediately grab the hookshot **(16)**. You'll also receive the Hookshot Operator's Manual file.

With your new toy in hand, return to the west passenger car. You'll be ambushed by a zombie in the kitchen, who has been hiding in the refrigerator, Cato-style, and is the guardian of three valuable empty bottles.

14



15

It's the release lever.

16

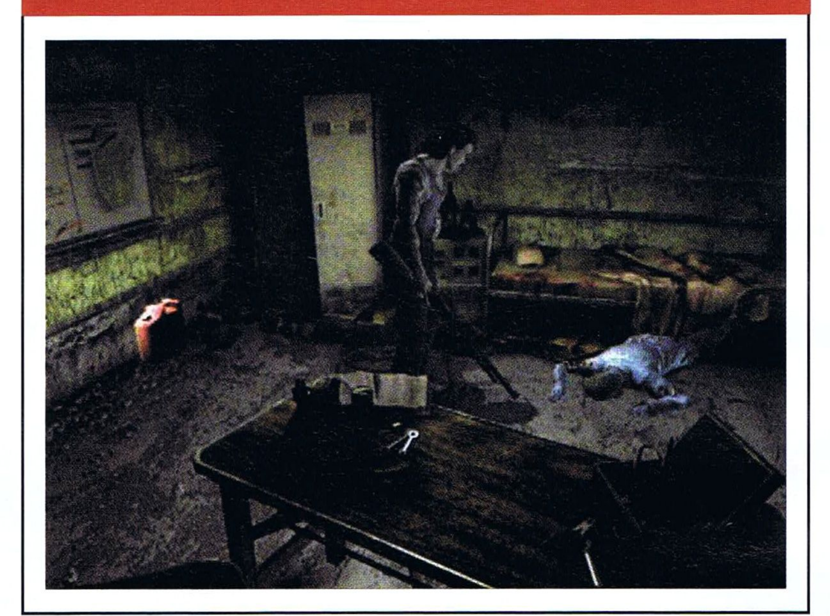


RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Make the dead even deader in part one of our tips spectacular…

MONSTER! ZOMBIE

The humble zombie is by far the most frequently encountered adversary in Resi Zero. They won't resurrect like the relentless Crimson Heads (thankfully), but they've a tendency to show up in narrow confines, making zombie-dodging a more troublesome proposition than it has been in the past. Fortunately, a relative surfeit of handgun ammunition, combined with an Eagle 6.0-esque chance for random headshots, compensates for this; one to eight handgun bullets will drop them in their tracks, as will a shotgun blast to the head. Finally, you'll find a rare "sleeper" zombie or two over the course of the game. You can always tell who these guys are, since their heads will turn to look at you as you pass (see below). They're harmless unless you get anywhere near their heads, whereupon they'll grab onto your character's leg and take a hearty bite. This does very little damage, and leads immediately into a gory explosion as your character crushes the zombie's skull underfoot, so it's really win-win all the way around.





TOP TIP MARKING ITEMS

The lack of inventory slots and item boxes in Zero will force you to get a little more creative with your equipment. Capcom have helpfully included a feature on the map screen where any item that you've dropped or tried to pick up shows up as a glowing dot, with an accompanying sliding field which'll tell you exactly what each dot signifies. Therefore, if you come across an item you'll need, but you don't have the space for it at the moment, pick it up anyway, but choose not to take it with you. That way, the item is "marked" on your map, and you'll know where to go to find it when you need to.



Dispatch him, and combine the empty bottles with the gas tank to create three powerful Molotov cocktails **(17)**.

The aforementioned broken ladder can be accessed with the hookshot. Use it to get back onto the roof, where you'll find another hole in the ceiling. Drop down through it, into another passenger cabin. This one contains a zombie sentry, a combat knife, and a jewellery box on the floor of the closet. On your inventory screen, use the Check command on the jewellery box to open it **(18)** and find the silver ring, which is the second key you need to unlock the briefcase **(19)**. Open the briefcase to find the Blue Keycard.

You'll be able to get out of the passenger cabin after the second time you try the door. Go through the second-floor hall (which should now be clear of zombies) to reach the stairs, then descend to the passenger car to reunite with your other character. There's now only one locked door left in the train, at the back of the Sleeping Car, and now you have its key.

The new Blue Keycard will open the door



to the engine room. Before you go in, there'll be a relatively long movie, featuring the lonely death of Delta Team **(20)**. When you do go in, don't panic; the bodies won't animate, and the killer swarm of leeches won't come after you… yet.

RUNAWAY TRAIN

Now you have a choice to make. You'll automatically get the Brake Operation Manual file when you enter the control room **(21)**, which explains that you need to operate both consoles on either end of the train to throw the emergency brake. Therefore, Billy and Rebecca will have to split up again. It doesn't matter who you send to the back of the train (although there is a special cut-scene if you send Rebecca). Whoever goes, he or she should really have the hunting gun, the better to decapitate whatever unruly zombie passengers get in the way. No ticket? Give them a spot fine – with a bullet.

Once you've chosen which character stays in the control room, a countdown



begins. Before you leave the control room, be absolutely sure that you grab the magnetic card from the top of the counter. You'll also find a box of handgun bullets on the floor.

Outside the control room, you can run straight past the two former soldiers before they decide to get up. There's only one zombie in the sleeping car, near the end of the hall, but he's got his back to you; if you run right past him without stopping, he won't touch you. The east passenger car's a bit trickier – you'll want to decapitate a couple of zombies so you have room to get to the east door. Finally, the west passenger car has only one zombie, but that happens to be the undead corpse of one Edward Dewey, who retains the bulletproof vest he had in life. If you want to put Ed out of his misery, you'd better do it with a shotgun shell to the face.

When you reach the back of the train, where you found the hookshot, you'll have to use the magnetic card on the glowing console to activate the Emergency Brake…



TOP TIP TACTICS

If Resident Evil Zero is your first experience with the series, or with the survival-horror genre, then you need to keep one very simple thing in mind: don't fight unless you absolutely have to. While Zero is a little more forgiving than other games in the series, largely because of the increased effectiveness of the handgun, you just won't have the time, health, or ammunition to kill everything you see. If you see any chance whatsoever to avoid a fight, via dodging around an opponent or using the local terrain to your advantage, then do it. A final note: both Rebecca and Billy can run a lot faster if they don't have a weapon equipped.

YOUR CHARACTERS
STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES

REBECCA

Rebecca is a little faster and a lot smaller than Billy, so it's easier for her to decapitate zombies with a shotgun (she has a better angle) and dodge monsters. She also has a truly pathetic amount of health; Rebecca will drop over dead after six to eight zombie bites, whereas it takes ten to twelve to kill Billy. She knows how to mix green, red, and blue herbs, and her special item, the Mixing Set, is necessary to solve a couple of puzzles.

BILLY

Billy, aside from being very, very hard to kill, is a better marksman than Rebecca. When equipped with a handgun (it does not matter which handgun), both of your characters have a random chance of getting a lucky headshot on a zombie, killing it instantly. For Rebecca, that chance is something like one in ten; for Billy, it's maybe two in ten. Furthermore, Billy is much stronger than Rebecca, and, as such, can push heavy objects such as crates.

The temptation is, obviously, to leave Rebecca out of harm's way most of the time and let Billy take all the risks. That's not always the best plan, however. A better idea may be to put Rebecca in charge of healing items and heavy weaponry such as the grenade launcher, so you can use her to clean out roomfuls of the vicious monsters you'll find later on, while Billy, equipped with the handgun and plenty of ammo, is your best pick against zombies and to explore new areas with.

When monsters are about, you can use the Partner menu to tell your inactive character to fire his or her currently equipped weapon, and he or she will do so at the nearest available target. This is occasionally useful, but more often, it's a plain and simple waste of ammunition. Also, if you want to get through an area without a fight, split your characters up before you enter, then run them through one at a time.

A final warning: when a creature latches onto you, a la a zombie's bite attack, you can hammer the buttons to escape faster. A CPU-controlled character has no such option, and will take more damage than you'd think.

UMBRELLA TRAINING FACILITY

Your characters will regain consciousness near the flaming wreckage of the train. Whatever items you dropped or "marked" (see above) in the train are scattered on the floor, so if you left any ammunition, weapons, healing items, or the hookshot behind, take a moment to collect them before you leave.

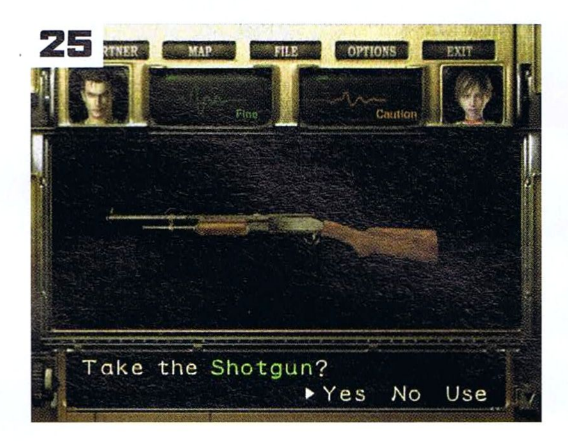
A short jaunt through a sewer later **(22)** and you'll be in the dusty front hall of yet another elaborately decorated, quasi-Victorian demesne. A long movie will shed some light on recent events , but afterwards, you are decidedly on your own.

The hunting gun, once empty, may as well be discarded. You won't need the hookshot at any point in the training facility, so you can safely leave it in the front hall. Give Billy a handgun and all the ammunition you have for it, leaving Rebecca to stock up on healing items and whatever shotgun shells you have left. Be sure you leave a few empty item slots.

There's a handy typewriter in the front hall, surrounded by such adventuring

22

23



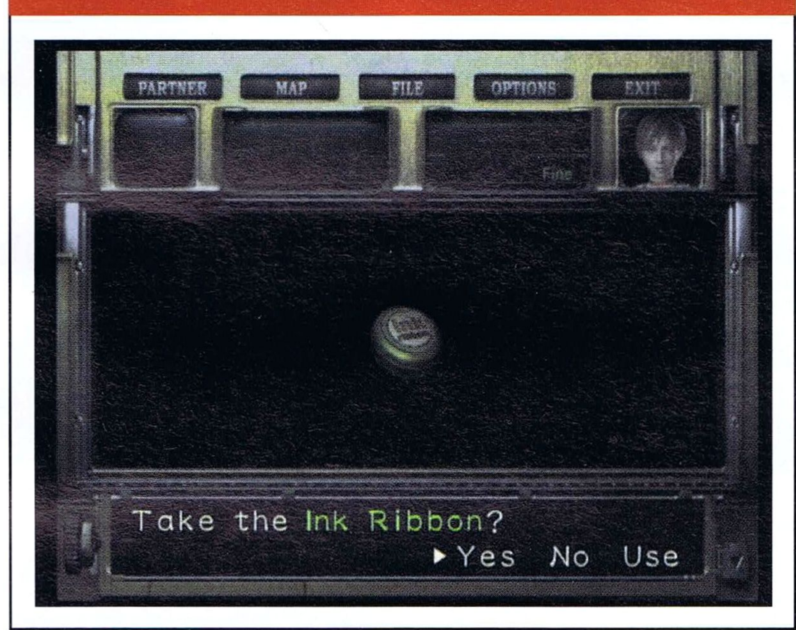
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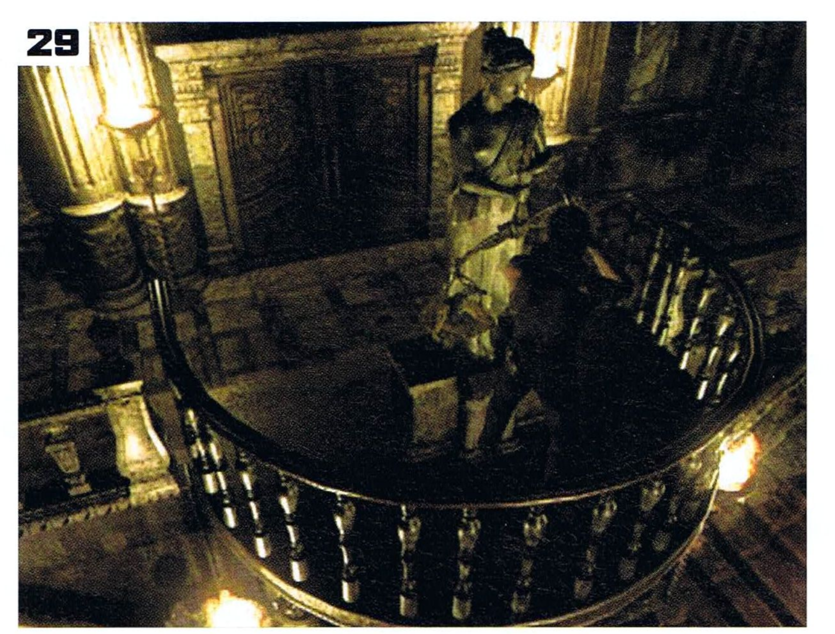

26


27

TOP TIP RIBBONS

Almost every time you find a typewriter, there'll be an ink ribbon somewhere in the same room. So unless you're an obsessive-compulsive who must save his game with unbecoming frequency, it's a waste of inventory space to carry ribbons around with you.




29

essentials as handgun bullets, an ink ribbon, a green herb, and a red herb. Note, if you please, that there is a front door to this place, but it is currently blocked by a pair of inconveniently armed knights **(23)**. Save your game if you wish, then take the east door.

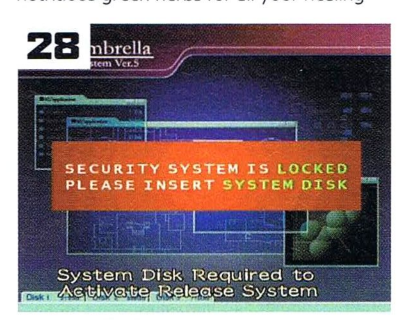
In the dining room, two tenacious zombies guard one of *Resident Evil*'s signature Strange Locked Doors™, and a box of handgun bullets, which are on a dinner table in the corner. To open it, the door will require a key with a fire motif **(24)**, which you lack. Remember its location and move on.



24

The north door leads to the boiler. A pesky steam jet blocks your progress in one direction, but an unlocked door in the other leads to a dusty storage room. Dispatch the pair of zombies therein to claim their treasure: a gas tank, a black statue and a pump-action shotgun **(25)** for Rebecca.

From the storage room, send Billy up the ladder to do battle with a pack of zombies that hang out on the second floor's exterior balcony **(26)** These zombies are 'horticulturalists' (insert your favourite Lock, Stock, and Two Smoking Barrels reference here), and have cultivated two delicious, nutritious green herbs for all your healing



28


30

needs. Blast your way through their ranks to unlock a door on the opposite end of the balcony, which leads to the facility's conference room.

Here you will find a glowing podium **(27)**, which requires a system disk before it'll do anything of lasting importance **(28)**; a box of shotgun shells, and an ink ribbon on the table in the corner; and the enlightening Regulations for Trainees file on one of the desks. Pillage and plunder as you see fit, discarding useless items as required. This room will always be refreshingly monster-free – as you know, monsters hate conferences – so you can use it as an adjunct to the front hall for item storage.

The double doors across from the glowing podium lead out to the front hall's second-floor landing. You can ditch the black statue onto the ornamental scale that overlooks the hall **(29)**, to save a little space.



31

Also, while you're here, visit the lounge, accessible via the west door on the front hall's landing. Inside, you'll discover the Notice to All Staff file and a crank handle in an open cabinet **(30)**, but be on your guard – acquiring the latter item cues the sudden entrance of a murder of undead crows.

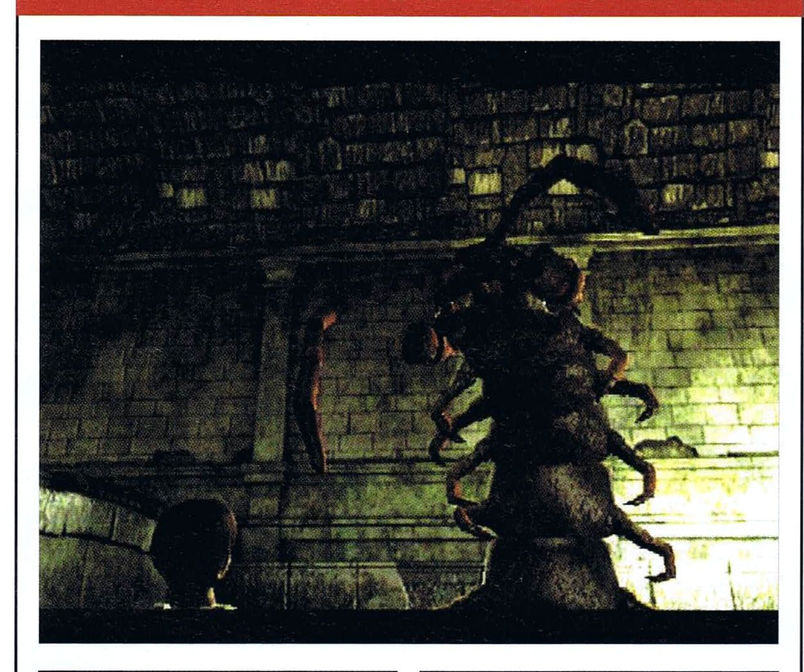
Like any other *Resi* game, shooting the crows is anything other than a waste of ammunition, and *Zero* is no exception. They do little damage, even to Rebecca, and they fly slower than you can run. Ignore them.

With the crank handle, return to the conference room. There are two doors on the west wall, only one of which is unlocked. That door leads to a short hallway, which terminates in a red door much like the one in the dining room **(31)**. Along the way you'll find a set of unlocked double doors that lead to the facility's research room. Inside, you'll discover such treasures as the Facility Map,

MONSTER! GIANT CENTIPEDE

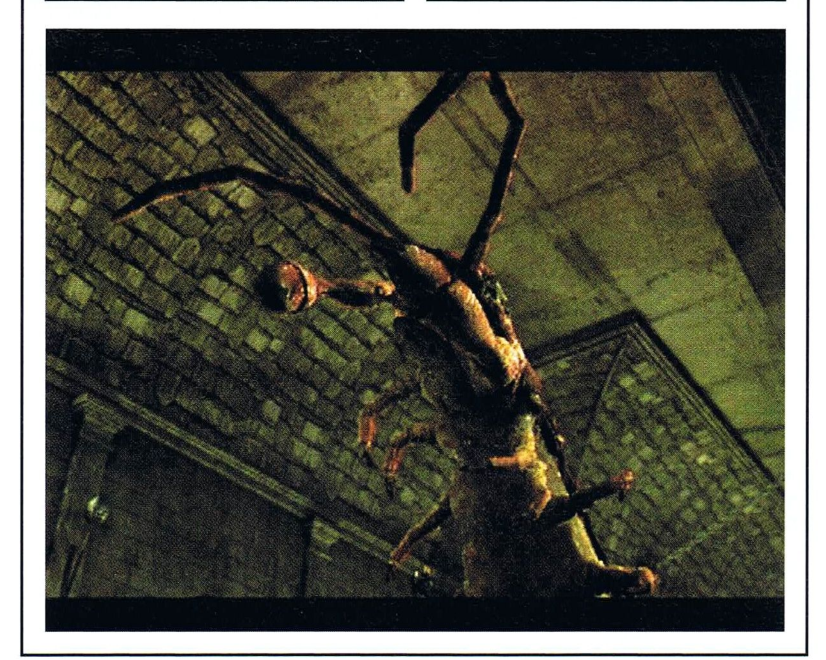
The giant centipede is somewhat lazy and inattentive, rarely deviating from a hectic schedule of slithering about the room. What's a bit more problematic is that its carapace renders it immune to small-arms fire, which means it must be slain via attacks to its soft underbelly.

Arm the grenade launcher and watch the centipede's pattern. When you see a chance, run over to stand in front of the centipede and toss a grenade into its body. This does, typically, mean that you are shooting directly at Rebecca, but she doesn't seem to mind. Assuming all six grenades hit the centipede's belly, it'll start moving a bit faster and a lot more erratically. Switch to the handgun, for the greater rate of fire and manoeuvrability that it affords, and put 15 bullets into its meaty parts. That should do the trick.









32



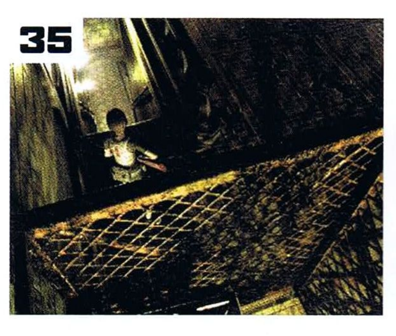
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34



35



36



an ink ribbon, and the mysterious Microfilm A, as well as a locked door with a candle next to it **(32)** The latter is a puzzle, of sorts, but you lack the appropriate tools to solve it with at the moment.

You can, however, have Billy use your new crank handle to operate the antique lift on the other side of the room. Rebecca isn't strong enough to turn the crank (ahem), so she gets to ride the lift up to a new area Make absolutely sure she has the shotgun before you send her up there, though…

Rebecca will disembark in the facility's clock tower. You'll have barely taken a step before a cockroach ambushes you; dispatch it with all due haste, using the instructions on the opposite page…

A second cockroach awaits you on the ceiling in the clock tower, but it's no threat as long as you know it's coming. A box of handgun bullets has been abandoned here, as has a perfectly good framing hammer that you, inexplicably, cannot take **(33)**. Of particular note is that the facility's antique clock has been vandalised, and is missing its minute hand.

Exit the clock tower to find an old stone patio, currently occupied by some more crows. A green herb and red herb grow here, but taking them will open Rebecca up to an unpleasant spate of needless peckery. You're better off ignoring them for the moment, unless you're in truly bad shape – a bit later on, the crows will abandon this area of their own volition.

The patio, in its turn, leads to a vast chamber that looks much like it was once used to feed animals **(34)**. It is currently quite empty, and its only other exit is sealed with the third and final 'knight lock' in the training facility. Instead, descend the side-stairs **(35)**.

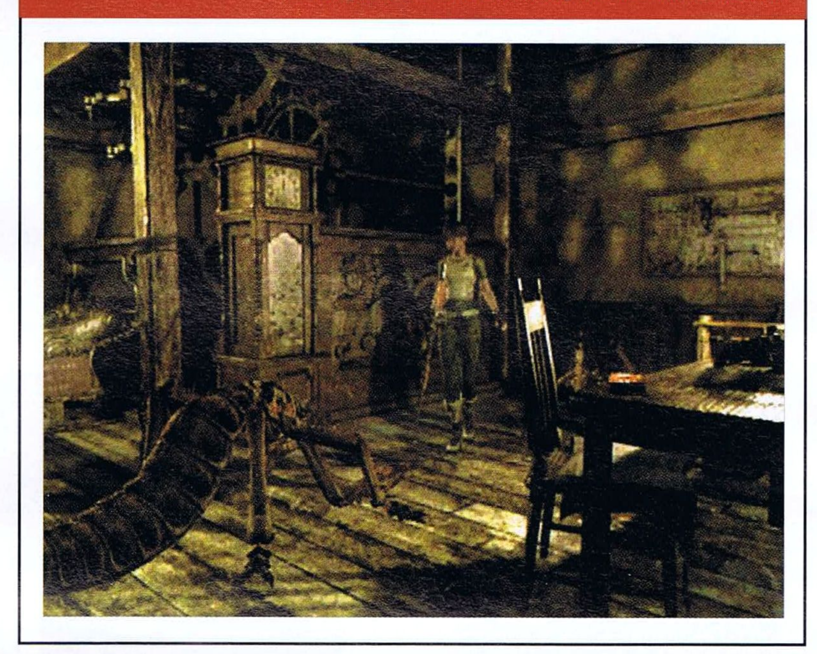
Unlock the furthest of the two doors in this hall, which leads to the front hall landing **(36)**. You can now switch to Billy – the feeding room is safe for the time being – and meet back up with Rebecca. (Be careful, as a new zombie lurks in ambush in the hall outside the research room.) When they've reunited, arm the healthier of the two with the shotgun and send them into the door nearest the stairs. This art storage room contains a pair of cockroaches, who have been set in place to guard a grenade launcher, a valuable box of shotgun shells,

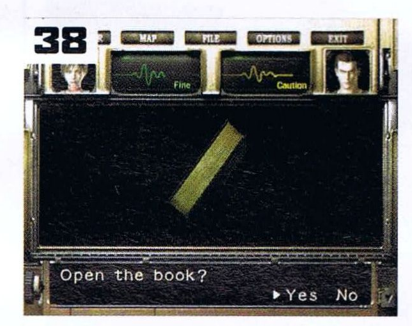
37



MONSTER! COCKROACH

These hideous little creatures are just durable enough to be irritating. They like to throw themselves through the air, and curl up immediately before doing so; this is your cue to dodge to the side. They're intensely vulnerable to flame, so a napalm grenade or two will quickly put them down. That apart, three shotgun blasts or 12 to 15 handgun bullets will do the trick.







and a peculiar white statue.

Meanwhile, back up in the feeding room, have Rebecca ditch all of her items near the set of cranks on the wall. Billy is strong enough to turn one of these cranks, which will raise an old iron cage down in one of the feeding pits and reveal a shiny thing. However, Billy has to stay right there holding the crank, or the cage will drop. Therefore, send Rebecca down after the shiny thing **(37)** which turns out to be the Facility Key. Sadly, nothing is ever that easy: cue the arrival of the Giant Centipede…

When the centipede dies, re-equip the freshly rescued Rebecca. You've work to do.

Your new Facility Key, you see, when examined, turns out to be the Fire Key. Thusly, you may use it to unlock the doors you've seen with the fire emblem.

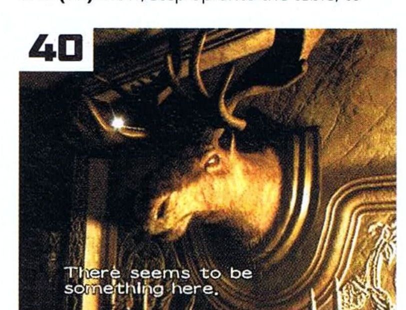
The door in the dining room leads to the kitchen, where you'll find three empty bottles and a bottle of lighter fluid, which can be used to fill Billy's lighter.

His lighter may, in its turn, be used to light the candle in the research room, which will open the way to the library stacks. There, after you cope with a messy zombie infestation, you can pick up a pack of grenades and, after Billy shoves an inconvenient bookcase out of the way, find the Book of Good in a hidden alcove.

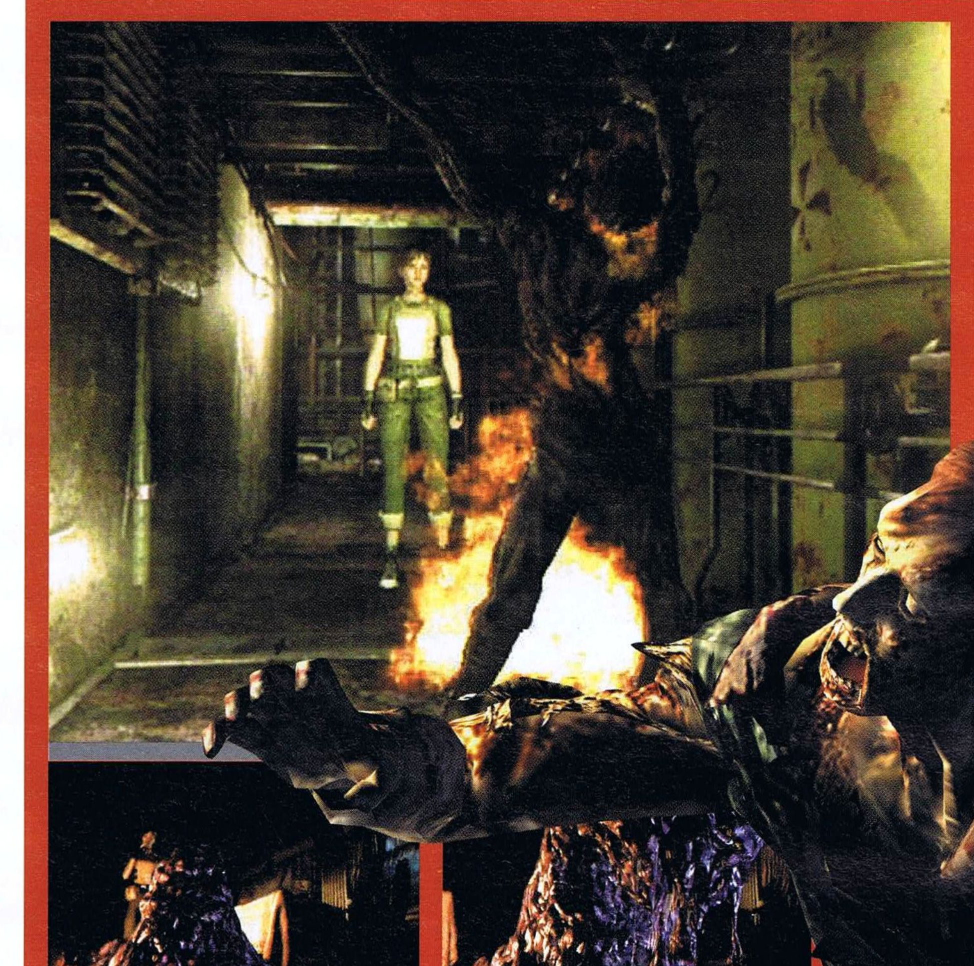
Examine the book in your inventory screen; inside it **(38)**, you'll find the angel wings. The wings may be combined with the white statue to form the Statue of Good.

While you're in the neighbourhood, you may as well check out the second 'fire door', outside the research room. Unlock it and discard the Fire Key, then go inside to find the assistant director's office. Have Billy push the table against the far wall, then check the desk for some shotgun shells, handgun bullets, as well as the Assistant Director's Diary file.

But wait! There's more to this. As Billy, step over the table and push it underneath the moose head above the fireplace, then turn on the lights with the switch on the wall **(39)**. Now, step up onto the table, to



STRETCH HARMSTRONG!



You don't encounter many leech creatures over the course of the game, but they're always a cause for concern. Their predecessor in the train had apparently been heavily sedated, as all subsequent leech creatures are fast, rubbery, nearly impossible to kill unless you use fire on them, and have a nasty habit of exploding on death.

When you first see a leech creature, it'll be in its 'resting' form of a green, slimy James Marcus clone. When it sees you, it'll hunch over and 'explode' into its bendy, even-more-evil incarnation. If you're fast enough, though, you can easily run straight past it and get out of the way well before it's in any position to hurt you.

If you need to avoid a leech creature that's already been activated, things are a little tougher. Stay away from it and watch it carefully. It'll rear its right arm back to slap at you, much like Code: Veronica's bandersnatches; when it does so, break to its left and run right by it. By the time it retracts its arm and turns around, you should be long gone. The leech creature also likes to latch onto your character's shoulders and drool on him or her, much like a zombie.

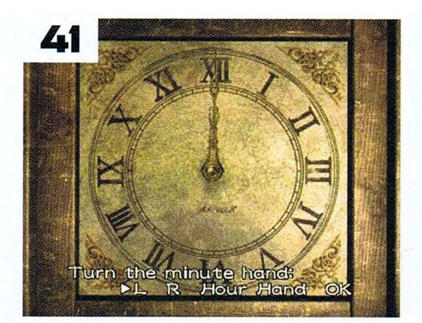
If you want to kill a leech creature, on the other hand, two or three Molotov cocktails are the only way to go. If you dispatch it via any other means – 16 to 18 handgun bullets, eight shotgun blasts, five to seven burst or acid rounds – you'll gradually blow off chunks from the leech-creature's body, starting with its left arm. Its head will go next, followed by its entire upper torso. When it's reduced to just a pair of shambling legs, it'll slowly walk after the nearest character, and when it gets close enough, will expand and then explode with stunning force. That explosion will deal out some serious damage to any character unlucky enough to be caught within its area of effect, and frequently deposits a payload of slimy leeches all over the area the leech-creature died in.

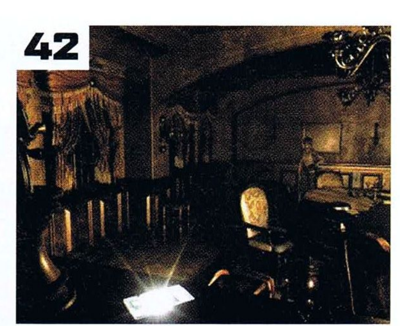
The advantage of using Molotovs against a leech-creature is that it doesn't result in an explosion or an annoying leech infestation. Another warning does apply, however: if you run out of Molotovs before you kill a leech-creature, and thus must resort to other weapons, the Molotov damage doesn't 'count'. If you tag a leech-creature with two Molotovs and then resort to the handgun, it'll still take the same amount of firepower before the creature dies.

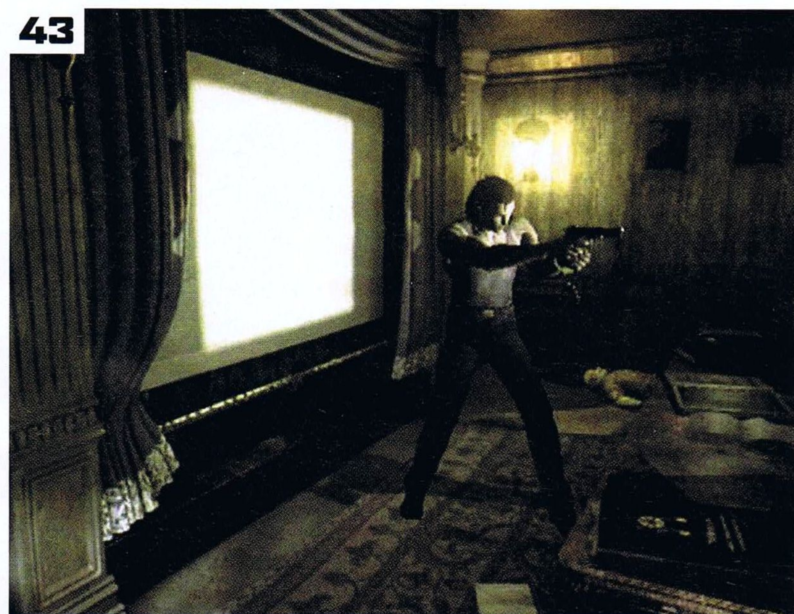
PUZZLE! CHESSBOARD

To solve this, you must move the white king on the larger chessboard, so it mirrors the white king's position on the smaller. You can't move the black pieces, and moving either of the white rooks will flood the room with poisonous gas. With that in mind, you may wish to send Rebecca to wait in a safe area while Billy moves the king about; no sense getting both characters poisoned, after all.

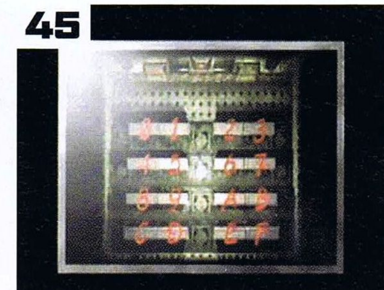
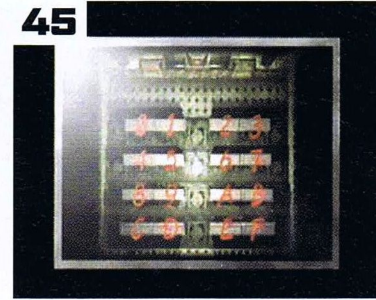
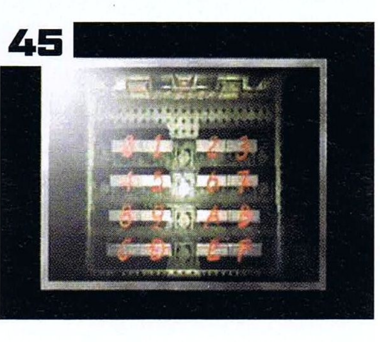
The trick is to move the king downwards, past the pawn, and then push it over to the right until it hits the side of the chessboard. Now, push it up against the rook. Success will open a secret panel in the desk, where you'll find the Book of Evil and Marcus' Diary 1 [sic] file.

41


42


43



44


45




find the glittering iron needle hidden within the moose's antlers **(40)**.

With that in your hand, cut back through the front hall and feeding pen to reach the clock tower. The iron needle will fit neatly into the clock, and, when you turn said clock to 8:15 (as recommended by the Notice to All Staff file) **(41)**, you'll trigger two time locks in the facility.

One of those formerly locked doors, as luck would have it, is right outside the door to the feeding pen, on the east side of the front hall's second-floor landing. Check it out, and you'll find several zombies in a luxurious meeting room. They have obviously come here to discuss the postmodernist sentiments expressed by the mystifying Verse of Poetry file. Contribute your opinion to this debate – with bullets – and, while you're at it, swipe the Microfilm B **(42)** and another box of shotgun shells.

Now that you've got both pieces of microfilm, you've got everything you need to unlock the 'knight doors'. Send one character, and only one character, into the west hall on the first floor, or else you'll be forced to contend with a leech creature in the hallway. The first door you come to leads to the facility's lone bathroom, where you'll find a green herb, a gas tank, and three empty bottles. Taking any of these items will elicit the appearance of a second leech creature, but you can run right past him for the exit.

The door at the end of the hall leads to the facility's audio-visual room **(43)**, complete with a box of bullets, two zombie film aficionados, and a conveniently running microfilm projector **(44)**. Insert Microfilms A and B into it to receive the Microfilm Image file **(45)** and the MO Disk.

The MO Disk, when you use it on the podium in the conference room, will cough up a randomly generated two-digit passcode. If you look at the Microfilm Image, each desk in the conference room has been assigned a number or letter, and furthermore, each desk in the conference room has a small computer panel on its surface. Split your characters up, and move them to the appropriately labelled desks; you'll know when you've chosen one of the right desks, because it'll light up when you press its button. Use the panels on the appropriate desks, one right after the other, and you'll unlock the 'knight doors' throughout the facility.

Two of those doors are completely irrelevant at the moment. The feeding room's 'knight door' leads to the facility's observatory, where you can snatch up some carelessly discarded handgun bullets and find a control panel with three strangely shaped hollows. (It's business as usual, then. Sigh.) You'll also find a set of locked double doors on the southern wall of the observatory, but those won't come into play until much later.

Going out the front door of the facility will, likewise, prove largely fruitless, but you may notice an elevator that's missing a battery, and a gleaming item atop one of the facility's ornamental pillars. Naturally, the bridge leading out to the outside world has collapsed **(46)**.

The 'knight door' in the conference room, on the other hand, is well worth your time. Through it, two zombies stand in silent, undead vigil over the facility's director's office and the infirmary.

The infirmary is, by far, the less exciting of the two locations. Here, you'll find two more zombies – which says a great deal about the quality of the medical care at this fine institution – who have hoarded two blue herbs and a first-aid spray. There's also a big tankful of green chemical for Rebecca's Mixing Set, which is worth taking.

The director's office is a little more entertaining. A case of rare napalm rounds, a box of handgun bullets, and an ink ribbon are being used as dusty paperweights. Furthermore, it seems the director was apparently a chess fetishist… (see the Chess Puzzle boxout…)

Once you've solved the Chess puzzle, you'll find the Book of Evil inside Marcus' desk. Just as was the case with the Book of

RESIDENT EVIL ZERO

Make the dead even deader in part one of our tips spectacular…

MONSTER! GIANT SPIDER

There are six spiders in the whole of the game, and they're all found within one of two hallways in the training facility. A single giant spider can be dispatched easily with two or three grenades (napalm are best), a few shotgun blasts, or seven to ten pistol shots. Even better, these spiders, regardless of how they're killed, do not explode into swarms of vengeful mini-spiders upon death.

Hard-bitten Resi *veterans know to regard giant spiders as obstacles, not opponents. In the hallways where Zero's giant spiders dwell, they're simple to outmanoeuvre, especially if they're clinging to a wall or ceiling. This limits their offensive capabilities to a drooled or flung jet of poison. A spider on the ground is trickier to run around, but the worst that'll happen is that you may take a low-damage bump from its mandibles.*



47

Took the Black Wing.

48

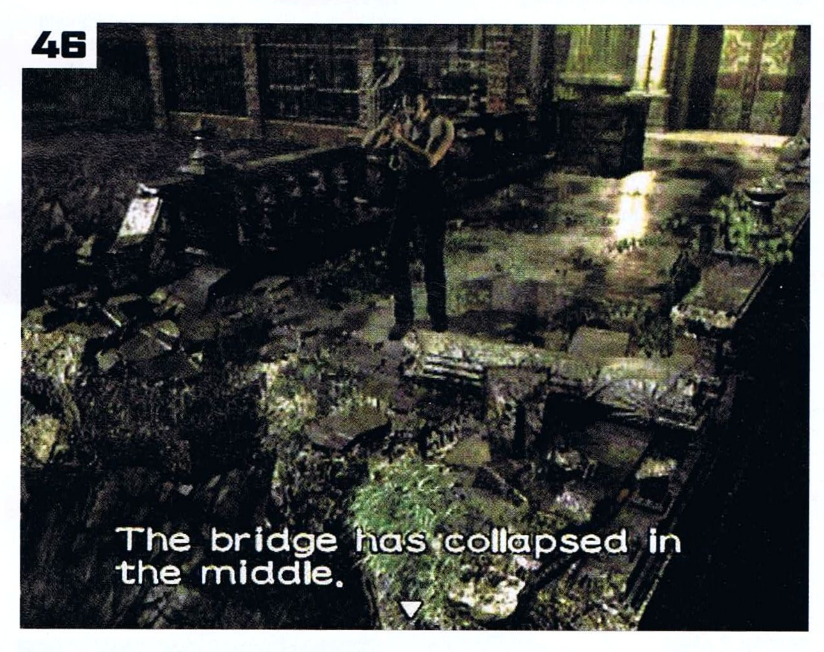
Black Wing

49

Statue of Evil

50

51



Good, the Book of Evil is a hiding place for bizarre statuary. Examine and open the Book to find the Black Wing **(47)**, which can be combined with the Black Statue **(48)** to form the Statue of Evil **(49)**. Using both it and the Statue of Good on the balances in the front hall will open a secret passage – arguably the most obvious secret passage of all time – behind the painting of James Marcus **(50)**.

The secret passage is crawling with giant spiders – our favourite monsters, and yours too, we know – so it's a good plan to arm your characters with the blue herbs from the infirmary. Simply hit the bottom of the stairs running, and outmanoeuvre each spider as you come to it; a spider that's clinging to the ceiling or wall as you pass is, essentially, a free dodge for you.

There's a side door in the secret passage, but it's locked for the moment. The door at the end of the hall is not. Inside, in the observation room, you'll find a green herb, a blue herb **(51)**, an ink ribbon and typewriter, the training Facility Basement Map, and the ominous Correctional Institute Inmates List file.

Don't leave anything important down here if you can help it, as once you leave, you have no reason to come back. Swap the handgun and ammo to Rebecca, while you weigh Billy down with the shotgun, whatever shells you have left, and a healing item or two.

To be continued next month!



in association with



THE TIPS YOU NEED FOR THE GAMES YOU'RE PLAYING...

TIPS EXTRA



READER KNOWLEDGE!

Once you've unlocked all the extra stages in Beach Spikers' World Tour mode then you can hold down R when you select the Arcade Mode to play on them instead of the normal ones!
Saskia Gray, Northampton

MORTAL KOMBAT: DEADLY ALLIANCE

EXTRA KOMBATANTS

Complete the Konquest mode with all the initial fighters, highlight Raiden on the character select screen, hold Down and then hit Start to fight as Blaze. Highlight Cyrax, hold Down and then hit Start to fight as the ker-ayzee Mokap.

IN THE MONEY

For a sneaky way to stack some coins, create two player profiles and earn a little bit of cheddar with each one. Start a Versus match and use the R-button to wager some coins on it, then continue to face off but only let player 1 bid coins and win each time. Player 1 will earn the victory coins, but player 2 won't lose any. Keep on beating the system this way until you've got over 30,000 of each colour coin – that's enough to unlock all of these hidden Krypt secrets:

Moloch's Lair 98 Ruby Koins (ZD Koffin)
Nethership 1472 Ruby Koins (DS Koffin)
Palace Grounds 4222 Sapphire Koins (KR Koffin)
Dragonfly 1400 Jade Koins (WT Koffin)
House of Pekara 2093 Onyx Koins (HP Koffin)
Sarna Ruins 2006 Sapphire Koins (PW Koffin)
Lava Shrine 1843 Gold Koins (II Koffin)
Drahmin 6500 Sapphire Koins (UR Koffin)
Frost 208 Ruby Koins (IV Koffin)
Hsu Hao 3317 Jade Koins (MW Koffin)
Jax 3780 Ruby Koins (SA Koffin)
Kitana 2931 Sapphire (KI Koffin)
Nitara 4022 Gold Koins (TI Koffin)
Raiden 3116 Jade Koins (XG Koffin)
Reptile 3822 Gold Koins (LL Koffin)

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

If you use a revert and then a manual after every ramp trick in Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4 then you'll be able to keep your combo going even after you get off the ramp.
Tom Shiney, Basildon



CAPCOM VS SNK 2

EXTRA EXTRA

After clearing the Boss mode a message telling you that you've opened up the Extra Options, er, option will appear.

INTO THE GROOVE

Play long enough to fight either Rugal or that nasty old Akuma, beat them, and then sit back as the game opens up the Groove Edit mode for you. This lets you create two EX grooves all of your own! Additionally, if you defeat all 48 contestants in the regular Survival mode without continuing then you'll be granted unlimited Groove Points for the Edit mode.

MIDDLE MEN

Notice that sometimes when you fight you get a middle boss to contend with? It's because either no Time Over has happened, the CPU player hasn't made over six First Attacks, or the CPU hasn't pulled off three of more Special Knockouts.

BIG BOYS

To play as the big men on campus, Akuma and Rugal, complete Arcade mode as either a Capcom or SNK fighter amassing over 1500 points, then beat them in the face-off grudge match.

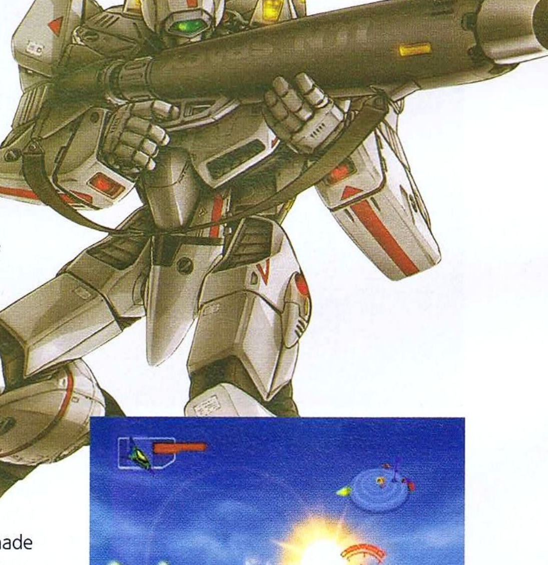
BIG BOSS

Beat both Ultimate Rugal and Shin Akuma to open up a Boss mode. This is accessed by holding down X and Y then pressing Start on the Arcade mode.

ROBOTECH: BATTLECRY

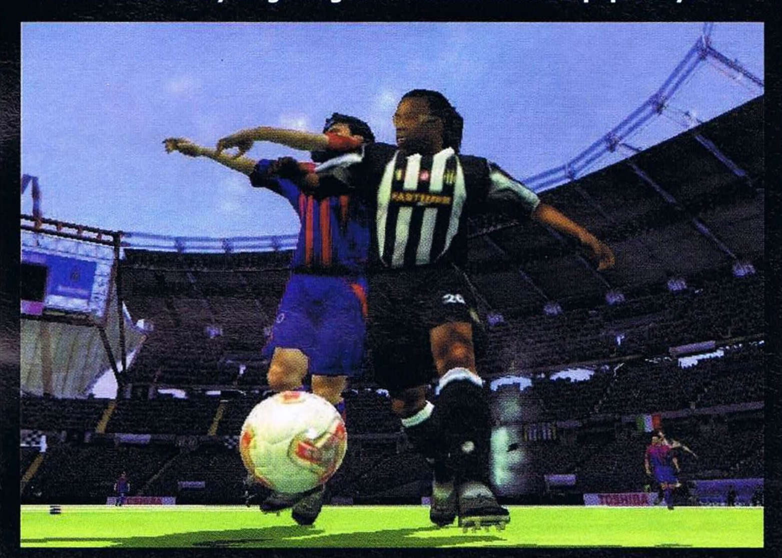
INVINCIBLE

To become a lean, mean, invincible fighting machine, start the Training mode but kill only two enemies. Exit, and return to Story mode. Voila – you're invincible, hombre!



READERS' TOP TEN TIPS

Wanna free game? How about you send us in a tip so good that we're forced to marvel at your gaming nous and dish out the top spot to you?



1. FIFA 2003

Transfer madness

If you are losing a match which you need to win, press Start and go to the Select Sides option. Now play as the opposite team, score own-goals until the scores are in your favour, then switch sides again.

Tom Sandifer, Vale of Glamorgan

2. MARIO PARTY 4

Life's a lottery

Not happy with your last go in the latest incarnation of this hit-and-miss series? Ruthlessly reset the Gamecube (but don't forget to save after every minigame). You can also use this devious trick to retry the lottery. But not the real-life one. Obviously.

Luke Haugh, Cambridge

3. ANIMAL CROSSING

It's the money, honey…

For easy money in this import game, take out your butterfly net and face a beehive. Catch a queen bee and you can sell it to Tom Nook for 4,500 bells!

Felix Foakes, Middlesex

4. TIMESPLITTERS 2

Mystical memory

When you're placing items in the Mapmaker mode, you only get charged memory space for the first of each set of items. So, after one fixed gun placement you might as well add loads. That's beast, well beast.

Rosalyn Plant, via email

5. HARRY POTTER

You will believe a Potter can fly

Get the Nimbus 2000 and fly up to the sky in Hogwart's grounds until you get a warning. Now look down and you can see lots of coloured rings to fly through

Wade Sherrard, Leicester

6. WWE WRESTLEMANIA X8

A man in a uniform

In Exhibition mode, pressing R or L allows you to change your wrestler's clothes into a secret costume.

Rosa Cisneros, Luton

7. SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE

The one that I want

At the start of Sirena Beach, turn left and break the middle of the three boxes for an easy peasy 1-Up.

Andy Peters, Southampton

8. BABIES

Nightcap

If your baby won't go to sleep, add a dash of vodka to its milk and soon it'll be sleeping like an, erm, baby.

Lindsey Ford, London

9. CRAZY TAXI

Big yellow taxi

Hit the L and R triggers three times quickly when selecting your character and you'll be able to ride a rickshaw instead of a taxi.

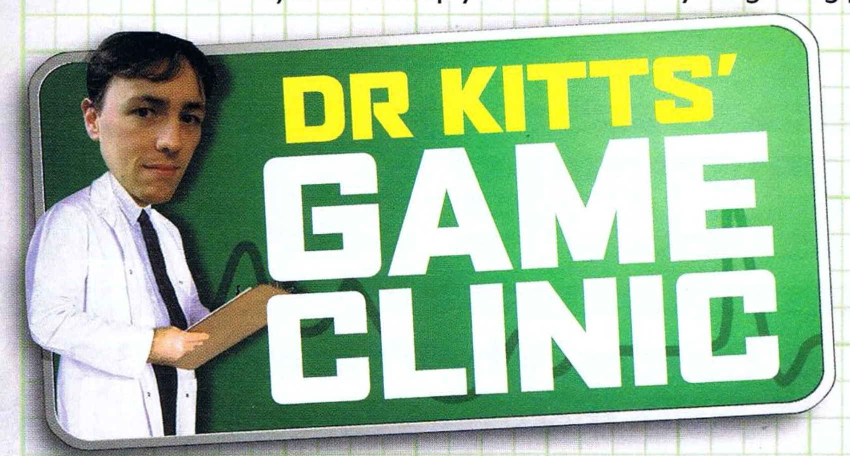
Ryan Attrill, Isle of Wight

10. ROGUE LEADER

Taking the bullet

When attacking the first Death Star, brake when you're in the trench so that the TIEs will fly past you. Now shoot them from behind.

Ian Scott, Coventry



After lunch with Alex Higgins, Dr Kitts plugs in a saline IV and relaxes to hip-hop music.

Dr Kitts,
I am a master at *Super Smash Bros Melee*. I have done every Event Match and completed everything with everyone. But I can't get more than 378m in Home Run, and I'm going mad…
David Morris, Wallasey

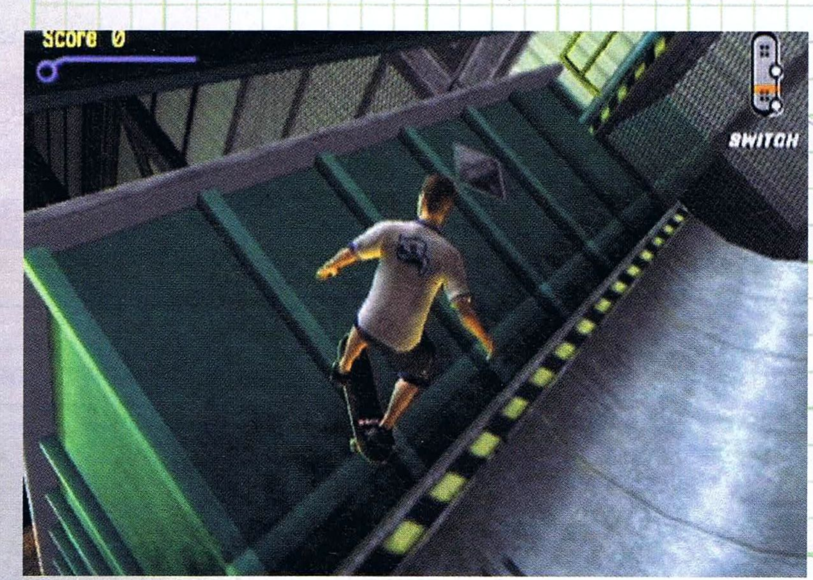
Dr Kitts is blamed by Kim Howells for a spate of playground violence in Yeovil…
Are you really going mad? My medical journals from the Summer of Love suggest that 'mental madness' is merely a psychosomatic state. But anyway, I digress, for what you really need is advice on hitting homers. Well, the easiest way to clock up over 1000m is to select Bowser as your heavy hitter. Now, grab the bat and dash right immediately, then start to juggle the bag in the air five times with the Up + A command. Make sure you don't charge up, then step back so you can strike the bag with the edge of your bat. Success will now be yours.

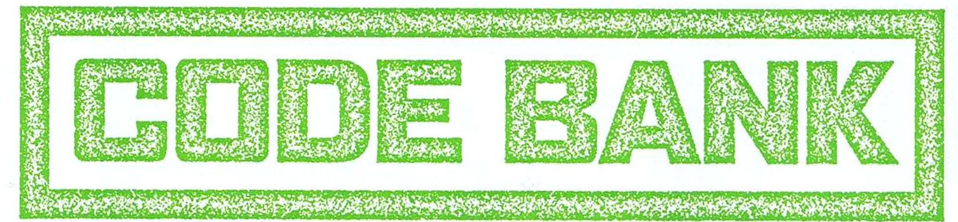
Dr Kitts,
How, on *Tony Hawk's Pro Skater 4*, do you reach the cell block rooftop on Alcatraz to do an eggplant when you're trying to do Rune Glifberg's Pro Challenge?
Brendan Audis, via the wonders of email

Dr Kitts joins a Village People tribute band (as the Indian).
In my day Alcatraz was a place where you locked up the scum that littered the streets of San Francisco, and an eggplant was a purple vegetable which went just lovely with a calzone. How things have changed. Ah, the challenge… simply pull off a Boneless (Up, Up and X) to get the required height. Next!

Dr Kitts,
I'm stuck in the room with the blocks in Persia 26BC in *Eternal Darkness*. What order do they go in?
Daniel Somerton, Fife

Dr Kitts endorses televised euthanasia…
It amazes me how the youth of today fail to cope with simple logic puzzles. The correct order, from left to right, is: Ulyaoth, Chattur'gha, Xel'lotath, then Mantorok.





Cheating? Why, it's as easy as 1, 2, 3 with these here codes…

STAR WARS: BOUNTY HUNTER

Forget using the Force – that's for Jessies, not Jedis. try entering these codes to cheat your way to the Dark Side…

- **ARTISTSROCK** All concept art
- **SEEHOWTHEYRUN** Unlock Chapter 1
- **CITYPLANET** Unlock chapter 2
- **LOCKDOWN** Unlock chapter 3
- **DUGSOPLENTY** Unlock Chapter 4
- **BANTHAPOODOO** Unlock Chapter 5
- **MANDALORIANWAY** Unlock Chapter 6
- **BEASTPIT** Unlock Mission 1
- **GIMMEMYJETPACK** Unlock Mission 2
- **CONVEYORAMA** Unlock Mission 3
- **BIGCITYNIGHT** Unlock Mission 4
- **IEATNERFMEAT** Unlock Mission 5
- **VOTE4TRELL** Unlock Mission 6
- **LOCKUP** Unlock Mission 7
- **WHAT A RIOT** Unlock Mission 8
- **SHAFTED** Unlock Mission 9
- **BIGMOSQUITOS** Unlock Mission 10
- **ONEDEADDUG** Unlock Mission 11
- **WISHIHADMYSHIP** Unlock Mission 12
- **MOSGAMOS** Unlock Mission 13
- **TUSKENS R US** Unlock Mission 14
- **BIG BAD DRAGON** Unlock Mission 15
- **MONTROSSISBAD** Unlock Mission 16
- **VOSAISBADDER** Unlock Mission 17
- **JANGOISBADDEST** Unlock Mission 18
- **GOFISH** Unlock the TGC cards



BLOOD OMEN 2

To open up the cheat mode, enter Z, R, L, B, X, Y at the main menu. You'll now begin with Soul Reaver, and come dressed in some lovely iron armour.

MINORITY REPORT

Great game, huh? Er, no. But there are some big-budget cheats for this less-than-blockbuster title. Experiment with the following codes:

- **NINJA** All combos
- **DIRECTOR** All full-motion videos
- **STRAPPED** All weapons
- **STEELUP** Armour
- **SLUGGER** Baseball bat
- **BOUNZMEN** Bouncy men
- **CLUTZ** Cluttered locations
- **SKETCHPAD** View all concept art
- **STYLIN** Dramatic finishes
- **WIMP** View ending sequence
- **BUTTERCUP** Extra health
- **FPSSTYLE** Free aim
- **LRGARMS** Invincibility
- **PASSKEY** The trusty ol' level select
- **QUITER** Level skip
- **MRJUAREZ** Maximum ammo
- **SPINACH** Maximum damage
- **MAXIMUMHURT** Pain arenas
- **SCARYCLOWN** Play as the scary clown
- **JAILBREAK** Play as a convict
- **SUPERJOHN** Play as a superhero
- **IAMSODEAD** Play as a zombie
- **GNRLINFANTRY** Play as a GI
- **HISSSS** Play as a lizard
- **BIGLIPS** Plat as Moseley
- **WEIGHTGAIN** Play as Nara
- **HAIRLOSS** Play as Nikki
- **MRROBOTO** Play as a robot
- **CLUMSY** Play as a rag doll
- **SLIZOMIZO** Play in super-slow motion

NGC READER KNOWLEDGE!

I've found that when you're playing Starfox Adventures, you should always barter with the shopkeeper at least twice – that way you'll get a much lower price on the stuff you buy!
.Ryan Janson, Hertfordshire

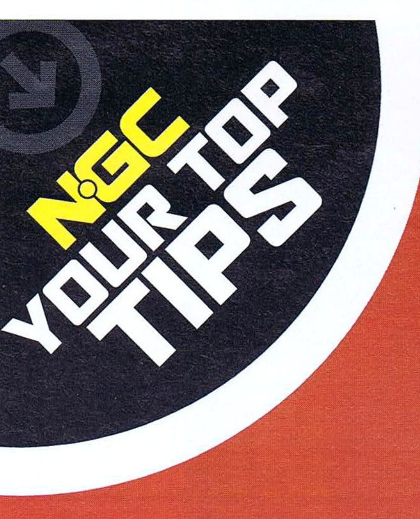
ROCKY

Get more Balboa to the pound with these cheat codes, and make the meat juice flow like human wine…

- **DOUBLE DAMAGE PUNCHES** Hold R and press Right, Down, Left, Up, Left, and L.
- **MAXIMUM STATS** Hold R and press Left, Up, Up, Down, Right, and L.







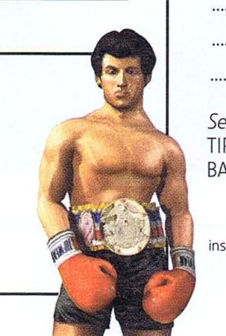
YOUR TOP TIPS Share the knowledge and bag yourself a prize…

Found an interesting cheat, tip, secret or quirky thing in one of your games? Then send it into us immediately! Each month we'll stick the best into our Readers' Tips section. In return, if your tip is the number one readers' tip, we'll send you a Gamecube game of your choice. Sound good? Then don't hesitate – DO IT!

HERE'S MY TOP TIP...

IT'S FOR

AND THIS IS HOW IT WORKS



Name ....

....

Address ....

....

....

....

..........Postcode..........

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TIPS EXTRA, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath, BA1 2BW or e-mail ngc@futurenet.co.uk

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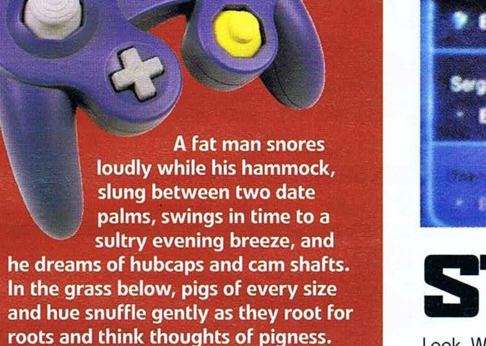


in association with



WHAT KIND OF A MAN IS AN I'M THE BEST MAN? HE IS THE ESSENCE OF BESTNESS IN THE FORM OF A MAN!

I'M THE BEST



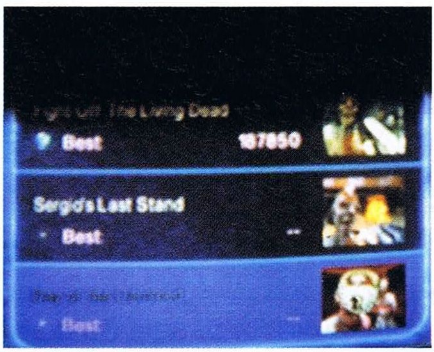
A fat man snores loudly while his hammock, slung between two date palms, swings in time to a sultry evening breeze, and he dreams of hubcaps and cam shafts. In the grass below, pigs of every size and hue snuffle gently as they root for roots and think thoughts of pigness. The year is 2056, the man is Paul "Pig King" Edwards, and he is about to be woken from his slumber by an unwelcome voice from the past…

"WAH! Wah! Wah WAH! WAAah!"

The dessicated form stirs and opens one liver-spotted eyelid. "Go away. I'm not laying out I'm The Best again. I'm joining the union, you scabs. The pay here's not even enough to…"

He sits upright, terror in his eyes; the words "No, Jud!" form on his cracked lips, and he slumps forwards. A Queensrÿche musi-globe drops from his grasp to shatter on the ground. The year is 2056. The man is Paul "Pig King" Edwards. And he designed this page. Remember him…

1





STAR PERFORMANCE

Look. We told you last month that Sean Ames' score on Fight Off the Living Dead was the best ever. We said a "score of that calibre" would be "holding the top of the table" for some time. Did we give anyone permission to show us up like that? Do you have any idea how upset we are? No, you don't do you?

So, as we wiped the grit from our eyes and the dirt from our faces, and stumbled into the chilly hell of issue 78, what do we find on the doormat? Not one, not two, not three, but FOUR scores, every one besting Mr Ames' hitherto storming score by a quite considerable margin. What, exactly, do you people do all day? Don't you have homework to do? Chimneys to sweep? Burgers to flip? Perhaps we should introduce a signed chit system, to make sure only fully-rounded, *normal* people are competing in the leagues…

Well, as they say, what's here today is gone tomorrow. So step forward **David Wallis**, **Brendan Doherty**, **Steven McKeon**, **Michael Wright** (above right) and **Jamie Randall**, all of whose scores so utterly and totally pasted Sean's that not only is he not top of the table, he's, well… under it.

That makes five joypads in one month, quite a serious depletion of our current stocks. So you'll understand that an even better score won't automatically entitle you to one as well. Check out the table on page 98 to see what we mean…

2

HOW TO PROVE YOUR ACHIEVEMENT

When sending us evidence of your gaming achievements, it's useful to follow these steps…

PHOTOGRAPHS

If you're sending us evidence of the photographic variety:

1. Turn off the camera's flash (or cover it up) to prevent it from reflecting off the screen.
2. Draw the curtains to eradicate sunlight.
3. Use a fast film (200 or 400 ASA).
4. If you're using a digicam then use a slower shutter speed.
5. Point at the screen and click away.

PLEASE NOTE: In the past we've had experience of certain scamps 'fiddling' with their photographic evidence, so this time round we're being extra-specially (is that right?) careful. We would, in fact, welcome video evidence over photographic evidence. If, however, you can only send photos, be warned: any doubts over the legality of your entry will lead to instant disqualification, and jeering.

VIDEO

If you're going to be sending us the evidence that comes on a tape, follow these instructions carefully:

1. Plug the TV lead from the Gamecube into the Signal In socket of your video.
2. Connect the Signal Out socket on your video to your TV.
3. Find a spare channel on the video and search for the signal.
4. After completing and recording the challenge, rewind the tape and send it in.

NGC YOUR BEST PERFORMANCE

3

HERE'S MY BEST PERFORMANCE…

MARIO SUNSHINE
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Sand Sprint ....
Best time on Il Piantissimo's Crazy Climb ....

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Highest score in Fight Off the Living Dead ....
Best time in Pane in the Neck ....
Best time in Escape from Neo Tokyo ....

LUIGI'S MANSION
Total number of Gs ....
Time taken to beat final boss ....

ROGUE LEADER
Battle of Endor kills ....
Death Star Attack accuracy ....
Star Destroyer fastest time ....

WAVE RACE
Aspen Lake best race time ....
Lost Temple Lagoon stunt score ....
Southern Island lap time ....

SUPER SMASH BROS
Highest score in Home Run ....
Highest juggle combo ....
Quickest time in 100-man melee ....

SONIC 2
Juggernaut Level number of rings ....
Escape from the Military Base best time ....

TONY HAWK'S 3
The Foundry highest score ....
Canada highest trick combo ....
Rio highest score ....

CRAZY TAXI
Ten-Minute Mode most money ....
Crazy Jump longest jump ....
Crazy Drift combo ....

SUPER MONKEY BALL
Fastest time on Frozen Highway ....
Highest score on Monkey Target ....
Fastest time on Advanced Floor 2 ....

Name ....
....
Address ....
....
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....
....
Postcode ....

Send to:
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If you don't want to cut up your magazine, send a photocopy instead, and continue on another bit of paper if you run out of room. Or just write with something other than finger-paints, or your bloody stumps.

LUIGI'S MANSION





See how many Gs you can notch up at the end of the game.

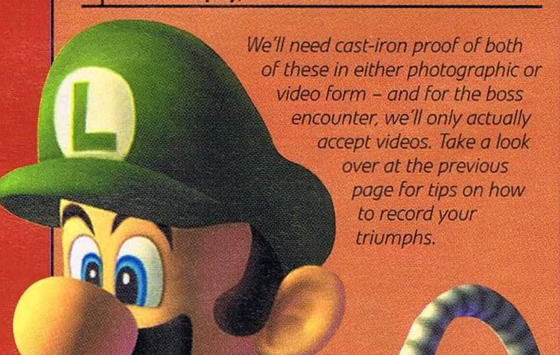
1	John Dawson, Hull	186,375,000G
2	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	185,710,000G
3	Daniel Mitchell, East Sussex	184,440,000G
4	Jamie Butters, East Sussex	184,060,000G
5	Mark Richardson, Leeds	183,575,000G



See how long it takes you to dispose of the final boss.

1	Tim Wingate, Tyne & Wear	122 secs
2	Grover Mitchell, Newport	139 secs
3	Alex Gough, Rochdale	142 secs
4	Jonathan Bisaby, Leicester	144 secs
5	Kelvin Turphy, Taunton	151 secs

We'll need cast-iron proof of both of these in either photographic or video form – and for the boss encounter, we'll only actually accept videos. Take a look over at the previous page for tips on how to record your triumphs.



STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER



Most kills on Battle of Endor (you must win at least a Bronze medal).

1	Kevin Ibbotson, Dublin	241
2	Dave Everey, Cheshire	221
3	Adam Goodwin, Anglesey	204
4	Joe Newman, London	191
5	David Gamble, Antrim	175



Highest accuracy on Death Star Attack (video evidence only, please).

1	Kieran Cornwell, London	93%
2	Chris Fletcher, Stockport	86%
3	Jack Gill, Northallerton	83%
4	Anthony Musson, Preston	82%
5	Thomas Scoffham, Nuneaton	80%

Fastest time achieved taking out the Star Destroyer in Razor Rendezvous.

1	Simon Thomas, Solihull	0:22
2	Gavin Maidment, Cheshire	0:23
3	Dave Everey, Cheshire	0:24
4	Paul Bowers, Wolverhampton	0:32
5	Alan Dyer, Maidstone	0:33

On Death Star Attack, we don't want to see you shoot three TIEs with homing torpedoes for 100 per cent accuracy – that's for maggots. We want to see video footage of REAL skill. Pics are fine for the other two.

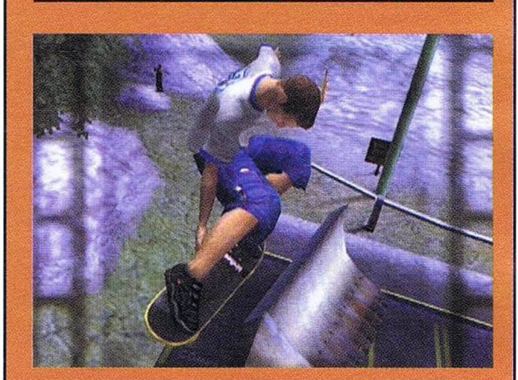
TONY HAWK'S 3





Highest point score on The Foundry level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	8,436,013
2	John Copeland, Co Durham	4,203,016
3	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
4	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	3,255,466
5	Chris Hepworth, Pontefract	2,691,264



Highest trick combo on the Canada level.

1	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	7,002,912
2	David Peacock, Co Durham	3,886,325
3	Gary Lord, Hull	2,173,200
4	John Copeland, Co Durham	1,879,038
5	Kieran Cornwell, London	1,589,816

Highest score on the Rio level.

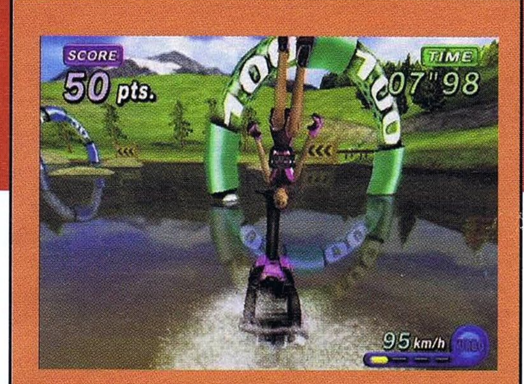
1	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	7,039,117
2	Andrew Nizinskyj, Barnsley	4,225,882
3	Mickey Ieronymides, St Albans	4,225,882
4	David Bennett, Isle of Man	4,095,129
5	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	3,786,550

Remember, Tony Hawk's 3 is blinkin' hard, so you'll need to put in the hours – once you have, get us your proof of the end screen in either photographic or, preferably, videographic form. Ta very much.

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WAVE RACE: BLUE STORM



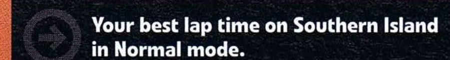
Your best race time on Aspen Lake in Normal mode.

1	Paul Holmes, Edinburgh	0'21"144
2	Dave Everey, Cheshire	1'00"890
3	John Dawson, Copeland Islands	1'01"614
4	Daniel Dunn, Boston	1'01"633
5	Frantzeskakis Dimitris, Greece	1'03"930



Your best stunt score on Lost Temple Lagoon.

1	Steven Lockwood, Bradford	35,545
2	Ben Tatlow, London	33,160
3	Jon East, Manchester	26,254
4	Frantzeskakis Dimitris, Greece	11,019
5	John Copeland, Co Durham	10,624



Your best lap time on Southern Island in Normal mode.

1	Dave Everey, Cheshire	0'16"276
2	John Dawson, Copeland Islands	0'16"334
3	Daniel Dunn, Boston	0'16"587
4	Andrew Cooper, Surrey	0'18"712
5	Benjamin Hayes, Berkshire	0'18"799

Fancy some? Again, we'll need cast-iron proof of your achievements – video is our medium of choice, although we may also accept some photographic evidence, provided – of course – that it hasn't been altered or messed with in some way.

TIMESPLITTERS 2

NGC NEW CHALLENGE

Your highest score in the Fight Off the Living Dead challenge…

1	David Morris, Wallasey	187,850
2	Brendan Doherty, Cheshire	153,725
3	Steven McKeon, Middlesex	91,325
4	Michael Wright, Newcastle	78,550
5	Jamie Randall, Reading	49,225



Your best time in the Pane in the Neck challenge…

1	Brendan Doherty, Cheshire	10.6 secs
2	David Morris, Wallasey	11.7 secs
3	Steven McKeon, Middlesex	13.3 secs
4	Tara Douglas, Leeds	14.1 secs
5	Gary Shaver, London	15.6 secs

Your best time in the Escape from Neo Tokyo challenge…

1	Brendan Doherty, Cheshire	17.1 secs
2	Tara Douglas, Leeds	22.5 secs
3	Steven McKeon, Middlesex	36.9 secs
4	Gary Shaver, London	40.7 secs
5	Geraint 'Stealth Master' Evans, **NGC**	57.6 secs

The challenges in TS2 are some of the toughest around, so you'll need to keep your wits about you if you want to beat these times, especially on the Fight Off the Living Dead challenge. A clear photo of the results screen will suffice for all three.

SONIC ADVENTURE 2



How many rings you can get at the end of the Juggernaut chase section.

1	William Thomas, Shropshire	440
2	Adam Ely, Weybridge	437
3	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	413
4	Robert McGuire, Co Dublin	334
5	Steven McKeon, Middlesex	307



What time you can notch up on Escape from the Military Base.

1	Tom Sherwood, Cheshire	01:42:52
2	Barry Templeton, Kilmarnock	01:43:57
3	Sam Ely, Weybridge	01:45:90
4	Nicholas Gill, Exeter	01:47:59
5	Jason Roberts, Stockport	01:51:43

Only the fastest need apply for this challenge. And we'll need video evidence for both of these beauties, too.





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SUPER SMASH BROS



How far can you hit the bag? We want to see your highest score in Home Run.

1	Ben Turner, Kent	974.3m
2	Dave Everey, Cheshire	602.6m
3	Jody Van Wijk, Netherlands	500.1m
4	Gary Butle, Berkshire	492.2m
5	George Graham, Surrey	489.2m



How many juggle combo hits can you get in before your foe hits the ground?

1	Ben Tatlow, London	13
2	Brent Foster, Ipswich	10
=	John Hammond, Hull	10
3	Richard Fitch, Derby	9
4	Scott Mearns, Ayr	7

Your quickest time in 100-Man Melee, using Mario only.

1	Ben Tatlow, London	03:05:90
2	John Hammond, Hull	03:11:04
3	William Peckover, Northants	03:55:55
4	Alan Mallon, London	04:22:65
5	Edward Teach, Bristol	05:01:32

Just as there's more than one way to skin a cat, there's more than one way to smack a bag – which is why we want videoed evidence of your attempt at the first challenge. Same goes for the juggle combo challenge – although we'll accept pics for 100-man melee.

MARIO SUNSHINE



Your best time on Il Pantissimo's Sand Sprint (Gelato Beach).

1	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	10:50
2	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	13:63
3	Dennis Fitch, Leicester	14:83
4	Michael Armoire, Rochdale	17:09
5	Samuel Woods, Ilkley	17:76



Your best time in Il Pantissimo's Crazy Climb (Pianta Village).

1	Daniel Rouse, High Wycombe	16:80
2	Sean Hinton, Kidderminster	21:55
3	Michael Armoire, Rochdale	24:50
4	Patrick Schultz, Austria	24:76
5	David Carr, Kent	25:02

Two timed challenges from the best Mario game since the last one – videoed evidence is, as ever, preferable, but we'll accept photos as long as they clearly show the end of each challenge with your final score displayed. You heard.



SUPER MONKEY BALL



Your fastest time on the Frozen Highway stage in Monkey Race...

1	Michael Rothwell, Wallasey	0:55:71
2	Dave Everey, Cheshire	1:28:36
3	Stephen McPhail, Cumbria	1:32:30
4	Kevin Murphy, Darlington	1:35:52
5	Richard Jolly, Hampshire	1:44:42



Highest score on Monkey Target (with Wheel of Danger turned off).

1	Dave Everey, Cheshire	8,970
2	Adam Williams, Exeter	4,380
3	Pavel Sikorsky, London	6,050
4	Will Prendergast, Berkshire	3,020
5	Richard Freeman, Derbyshire	1,000

Your fastest time on Advanced Floor 2 in the Main Game.

1	Simon Mason, Bournemouth	50:94
2	Janne Kaitila, Finland	51:12
3	Dave Everey, Cheshire	54:85
4	Dan Colley, Ipswich	58:56
5	Billy Keach, Essex	59.50

We'll want a picture of your monkey crossing the finish line for the first challenge, but a simple picture of the results screen will suffice for the other two. And don't forget to turn the Wheel of Danger off for the second challenge – there's really no point. At all.

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30 MONMOUTH STREET/BATH/BA1 2BW

MAILBOX

EMAIL US!

Why not bother us with an email over the electronic ether. The magic of technology means it gets there *the same day*! Get us at ngc@futurenet.co.uk RIGHT NOW!

STAR LETTER

WIN YOURSELF A BRAND-NEW GAMECUBE GAME!

'Dull quickly'

In issue 76, when you reviewed *Sonic Mega Collection*, you said that the transition from 2D to 3D wasn't such a good idea. In my opinion, 3D platformers have never been as good as when they were in 2D, and *Sonic Adventure 2* is actually the best conversion to 3D I've seen. *Mario* hasn't fared too well in 3D (*Sacrilege! – The Entire World*). I found *Mario 64* and *Sunshine* chores to play. They were fun at first, but became dull quickly – devoid of any real action, and based around puzzles that were either too easy or too obscure. Sadly, the majority of 3D platformers are based around the *Mario 64* formula, with only the *Sonic Adventure* titles being based on the more linear style of level I prefer. It thus confuses me that *Mario 64* is seen as the best game ever, when it's really just the start of a genre that was novel at first, but never got any better. *Mario* and *Donkey Kong* overdo it, their levels become too spread out, and lose their interest.

Maybe game levels should become linear again, like in *SA2*, where certain sections of the game were actually tricky, but you needed to get past them to get to the next part. Also, the enemies become more dangerous when jammed into a smaller area of a linear level, not a vast landscape.

Alistair Aitcheson, via email

***We can't bring ourselves to agree with you concerning* Mario*, but we certainly don't have anything against linear games – you just have to look at* Eternal Darkness *to see that it can really enhance the gaming experience. And you do make some excellent points. It's just that* Sonic Adventure 2 *featured a terrible camera, you didn't actually do much controlling, per se, in the linear levels, and the music and voice-acting truly stank. We'd love to see a* Sonic Adventure *that gets it right, though.* Ed**

'TIME has PASSED'

On page 99 of issue 76, you answered a letter from Chris Rickard, asking "where do you go after 3D?" Well, Nintendo have gone past 3D, and into the realms of 4D. According to physics (bear with me), the fourth dimension is the passage of time; Nintendo Gamecube, unlike any console ever made (with the exception of the 64DD) has achieved this. *Animal Forest* is the ground-breaking game that uses this principle. You said it yourself: miss a few days and some of your friends may fall out with you because you never visited. Time has passed. TIME has PASSED. This is a revolutionary step for Nintendo that makes them utterly unique.

Joe Timms, via email



△ *Animal Crossing*: All hail dimension number four!

***We were so disappointed when you failed to reveal that your Gamecube actually possessed the ability to travel through time, rather like a miniature Tardis. However, a good point (well made) all the same – we especially enjoyed the emphatic use of capital letters. WELL DONE!* Ed**

Bonus Letters

I was shocked. Breathless, in fact. How can this be?
Tom, via email
***It's a simple case of cause and effect.* Ed**

The US only got it because they sent in 10,000,000s of emails.
Gordon Dahms, via email
***That's a heck of a lot of emails, son.* Ed**

I love *Mario Kart*, I want *Mario Kart*, I need *Mario Kart*! NEED!
Martin Futter, via email
***Good man. Also, it appears to be quite the month for readers with splendid names. Well done, you.* Ed**

Is it just me, or does it feel like the other consoles are laughing in our face?
K Bleakley, via email
***I ain't never done seen a console laugh. Although I did once see an elephant fly. High. In the sky.* Ed**

'Two maps-worth'

I managed to recreate all of the *TS2* maps you printed in issue 76, but there's something about your Bunker map that really puzzles me…

When I finished the map – using the exact same method as yourselves – I had almost no space left for creating or adding anything else. And I didn't even have a single door, window, weapon or lighting effect added at that time. In fact, I found I was only able to add one extra item, and maybe a couple of other things if I removed some other parts of the map. But that only made it a lot less than a proper *GoldenEye* map, with all those memorable features. Then, when I looked at your screenshots, I saw you had about a quarter of your memory left – I was wondering how on earth you managed to do that? Did you use a cheat cart or something? Or were you able to merge two maps'-worth of memory together, or what?

Oliver Parry-Jones, via email

***Nothing so arcane, I'm afraid. We produce the magazine further in advance than you might think, and the feature was written using the original review code for* Timesplitters *that Eidos sent us. Occasionally, last-minute changes are implemented in the code, and that would seem to have been the case here, as the retail version of the game leaves you with less memory to play with. Unfortunate, but it wouldn't have happened unless there was a pretty good reason for it. However, we're quite sure that the maps we featured could be created more economically – has anyone had a go? We'll be featuring some readers'* Timesplitters 2 *maps next issue, so keep your brainboxes tuned in proper. And in the meantime…* Ed**

'Matter of nanoseconds'

In your *Timesplitters 2* Mapmaker guide for the grid level in issue 76, you say that you can't recreate the elevator – well, you're, quite simply… wrong. By placing a teleporter where the elevator used to be, you can reach the other, higher part of the level in a matter of nanoseconds. You can't have a frantic fight with an enemy in there any more, but at least you can quickly escape fire fights and get from one floor to another without having to take a detour.

Lucas Saunal, via email

***By cracky, you'm be roight! We'm be completerley overlookin' thurr telly-porter, loik. Durrrr, etc…* Ed**

'Some kind of sense'

I'm a big fan of your mag, and it's easy to see why it's so popular. I haven't been reading it long (only since issue 70, in fact), but it's now my favourite gaming mag.

MAKE MAPS IN TS2
Relive classic deathmatch moments from *GoldenEye*…
…deogamedom, born again in fancy Gamecube-o-vision.



HONOURABLE MENTIONS

Thanks to everyone else who wrote and emailed us this month. You included: Bertilda Knott, via email; Ronnie, via email; Eirikkkkkk Dahll-Larss□n, via email; John Pee, via email; Ben Campion, Hampshire; S Callard, via email; Phillip Denton, via email; I Robot, Planet Dirtbox; Danny Jordan, via email; James Batchelor, via email; James Cussen, via email; Phillip Dyte, via email; Jake Griggs, via email; Trowa Barton, via email; 'Paolo', via email; Julie Wheatcroft, via email; Adam Noakes, via email; Scott Purvis, via email; Chris Lucas, via email; Gareth Lees, via email; Dan Sinclair, via email; Shaun Lomax, via email; Chris Parker, UKNside; Roger Cox, via email; David Prangley, via email; Sam Rees, via email; Shane Griffin, via email; Paul Conway, via email; Chris Dove, via

1. BOTTLING PLANT

Map wrongness, the fourth dimension, and the sense of Lex Luthor

One thing puzzles me, though – what the hell is going on with Lex Luthor's Solve My Maze? Said feature looks as if it was created by a mental patient who was locked up in a small room for half an hour and given a picture of Lex Luthor, scissors and some crayons. However, there appears to be a winner every month, and – more importantly – prizes, so it must make some kind of sense. Would you mind telling me exactly what kind of sense that is?
'Darkdeity86', via email

About the same kind of sense as Paul's infamous 'Sense Talk', Darkdeity86 (does that mean that there are at least 85 others?). But the rest of your speculations are pretty much accurate. Which is why we've killed him off this issue. Ed

Bonus Letters

Nintendo could make a game twice as cool as a bunch of monkeys flying around in aeroplanes.
Arran Garside, via email
What on earth could be twice as cool as that? Ed

It looks like some squares put together to make a weasel spinning in a mad zone.
Tom Sherwood, Outer Space
What have you been eating? Ed

I am disgusted at the way Fox demeans Prince Tricky in Starfox Adventures.
Rob Yeo, via email
He likes it really, the irritating little runt. Ed

Think about the possibilities when you go to bed, then try and tell Shigsy!
Toby Adam Smith, via email
There was an uncomfortable silence in the office when this letter was read out. Ed

Does Shigsy have four arms?
N K Harry, via email
He hides them well. Underneath his wig. Ed

'Certain door aspect'

What a brilliant letter in issue 76 from Robin Kuipers. He sounds like a great father, if he can balance playing 'his' adult *Resi* game with time for joining his son on *Mario*. Not being a parent myself, it must be difficult knowing what to let your kids play and not just giving into them for the sake of a bit of peace… well done, Robin! Regarding *Resi Zero*, though, I read your import review, and it seems that you are giving it a lower score because of the puzzles and the controls. I personally don't mind the controls of any of the *Resident Evil* games I've played, and I also think that if the controls were to change, many people would be put off because they are used to *Resi* being played that way. Also, puzzles are puzzles, if you get what I mean. If you took away the push-said-object-over-there, get-certain-key-for-certain-door aspect, the game would just become another zombie slash-fest, which isn't what *Resi* has ever been about. I think this makes *Resi Zero* a great game because it's usually these basic puzzles that people haven't done when they get stuck in the game. Take away the basic puzzle structure from *Resi* and I think they might as well make their last game.
Aaron Hillyard, via email

It was great to hear from someone like Robin, who's an avid gamer but has other demands on his time that the rest of us might not necessarily appreciate. But as far as* Resi*'s concerned, your points are equally as valid as ours, and if you can appreciate the things about the game that irritate us, then that's great. It's just that, in our eyes, it's long overdue that the series tried to move on a bit. Admittedly,* Zero *does introduce some new elements, but it's novelty and baby-steps at the end of the day. We're hoping for something really special with* Biohazard 4. *Ed

'Frustrated PAL'

Considering the massive delays either being experienced or to be experienced by European gamers in getting their hands on such triple-A titles as *Resident Evil Zero, Metroid Prime, Animal Crossing, Winning Eleven 6: Final Evolution* and *Legend Of Zelda: The Wind Waker*, I wondered if you'd consider running a feature on importing Gamecube games. More specifically, it would be a great help to detail the best ways for a PAL Gamecube owner to get to play these titles on import. I feel this would be very useful indeed for many a frustrated PAL GC gamer.
T J Vickerman, via email

We get a lot of correspondence on the subject of importing. With the frankly shocking delays between the NTSC and PAL releases of* Metroid *and* Zelda*, it seems many readers are taking the plunge and going the import route. Importing is far more reasonable nowadays, financially speaking, than it used to be, and the proliferation of online shopping has helped make it easier, too – as a result, it's more widespread than it was a couple of years ago. Expect a feature on the whole issue soon. Ed

'Luck is involved'

Can I ask you why *Mario Party 4* was given the very average rating of 68 per cent? That only makes it as good as titles such as *Godzilla* and *Disney Sports Football*. Come on! It seems to me that you gave it 68 because it was very similar to the original *Mario Party*, and its predecessors. But haven't you forgot that some people haven't even seen the *Mario Party* idea before? Having seen your review, I decided to give it a go with a rental at Blockbuster. And I really don't want to have to give it back today. Oh, and I know that a lot of luck is involved, but should that mean it gets 32 per cent knocked off? Look at *Super Monkey Ball*.
Ben Case, Surrey



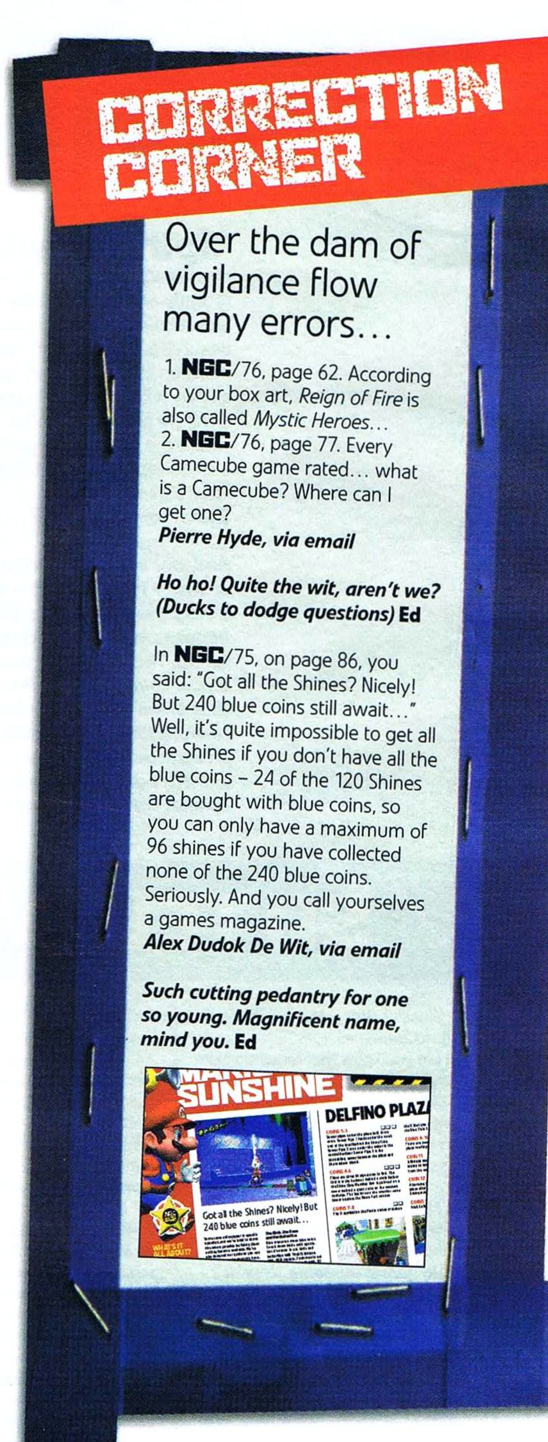
△ **We can think of a few better parties we've been to.**

So you're saying we should artificially inflate scores for certain games just for the benefit of people who haven't played them? What about all the people who are fans of* Mario Party*, and will find that the game is manifestly worse than* Mario Party 2*, the pinnacle of the series? In the right conditions – ie, with three friends – it can be a great laugh, but we're not going to ignore the faults, lack of invention and downright tedium it sometimes engenders. And once we start being uncritical of games, then we've failed in our job. Ed

'Restrict my usage'

Online gaming is coming to consoles – and everyone should be happy! But I'm not. I live in a part of the 75 or so per cent of Great Britain that won't have a broadband connection when it arrives (*Er, hasn't it? – Ed*). On my PC it's impossible to play first-person shooters on a 56K modem (in my humble opinion, first-person shooters are the best genre of game around). This will greatly restrict my usage of any internet connection, so is it really worth spending my hard-earned dosh on something I can't use properly?
Ian Robinson, Derby

At the moment, we'd suggest you don't worry unduly about online gaming.* Phantasy Star Online *is imminent, but it's designed for a 56K modem, so you won't be missing out on anything by not having broadband. Other than that, there's not a huge amount in the foreseeable future that's going to trouble you as far as playing over the electric interweb is concerned – certainly, there are no first-person shooters that will require a big fat broadband connection. We suspect Nintendo will gradually introduce the concept of online gaming by posting high-scores to the web, and they definitely won't introduce anything involved (such as, say,* Mario Kart*) into the online world until the technology, and price, is right. Ed



CORRECTION CORNER

Over the dam of vigilance flow many errors…

1. **NGC**/76, page 62. According to your box art, *Reign of Fire* is also called *Mystic Heroes*…
2. **NGC**/76, page 77. Every Camecube game rated… what is a Camecube? Where can I get one?

Pierre Hyde, via email

Ho ho! Quite the wit, aren't we? (Ducks to dodge questions) Ed

In **NGC**/75, on page 86, you said: "Got all the Shines? Nicely! But 240 blue coins still await…" Well, it's quite impossible to get all the Shines if you don't have all the blue coins – 24 of the 120 Shines are bought with blue coins, so you can only have a maximum of 96 shines if you have collected none of the 240 blue coins. Seriously. And you call yourselves a games magazine.
Alex Dudok De Wit, via email

Such cutting pedantry for one so young. Magnificent name, mind you. Ed

email; Jonathan Matthews, via email; Sebastian Chodakowski, via email; Daniel Day-Lewis' ridiculous stovepipe hat, New York; Paul Tsang, via email; Laurence Winder, via email; Bill Rothwell, via email; Ross Donnelly, via email; Ernie Wise, the ether; Charles Radclyffe, via email; Alex Harrison, via email; and many, many more!

Grintendo!

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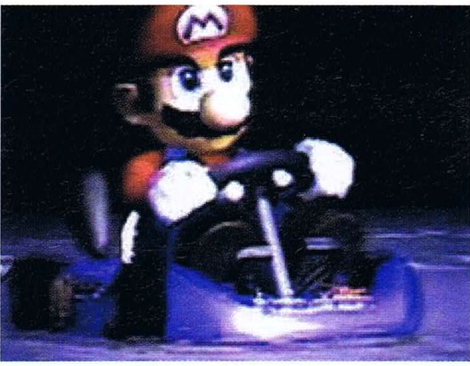


'Spiritual vibrations'

I was reading the Daily Mail's Weekend magazine recently and found something interesting. There was an article on actress Mena Suvari (who was in American Beauty), and she stated: "My childhood home, a Gothic mansion in Rhode Island, had spiritual vibrations. I always felt something in the house."

As we all know, a Gothic mansion in Rhode Island is where the sublime *Eternal Darkness* takes place. Is this a coincidence? Or was this mansion Silicon Knights' inspiration for *ED*?
Shaun Laird, via email

***And, not without coincidence, it was also the home of writer H P Lovecraft – whose Cthulhu mythos transparently provides the basis for everything that happens in* Eternal Darkness *– used to live in Rhode Island. This has led to some wild speculation in the office, culminating in Paul's astonishing deduction that Mena Suvari is, in fact, the reincarnated Howard Phillips Lovecraft, and is about to embark on a successful literary career involving dank eldritch horrors and forbidden texts that drive men insane. We sent him back to his pigs.* Ed**



△ Just this once, churn out more games, faster…

'Heartless family'

Your magazine is brilliant, but I really think it could use a release list. I'm sick of desperately surfing the internet only to end up with an incorrect release date. I think you might have had one a long time ago in N64, but I can't find any of my old mags – they've probably been discarded by a heartless family member. Thanking you in advance. I'm sure you won't fail my expectations.
Matt C, via email

***Luck is with you, young man. The reason we hadn't done it before is that we were missing even the loosest 2003 schedule from Nintendo – luckily, however, they managed to get one out in January of this very year, which was cutting things a bit fine, but there you go. Anyway, you can now check our brand-new Ultra Release List over on page 21.* Ed**

'More games faster'

I have reservations about Nintendo's new shorter/more games policy. The N64 had fewer games but many of those games were great because the producers took their time and made sure their titles were up to scratch. I fear that if Nintendo try to churn out more games faster the Gamecube may go the way of PlayStation: More games, but only a handful that are high quality. I would rather wait a while than have barely any games that I need to own.
Tom Schofield, via email

***It's a tricky balancing act, to be sure, but Nintendo seem to be doing okay (Mario Sunshine was truly exemplary). But then, they haven't exactly been churning out the goods so far, have they? And let's not forget how astonishingly successful the PSone was…* Ed**

SO TELL ME THIS…

We take the hoover of knowledge to your carpet of brain-fug.

1. What's better – *Metroid Prime* or *Mario Sunshine*?
2. Did you know that Nintendo have confirmed *Pikmin 2* and *Mario 128*?
3. Did you know Capcom are releasing a online *Resident Evil* title on PS2? Well, did you?
Sam Wallis, via email

1. Metroid Prime. Although, to satisfy the pedants among you who might wonder why we gave both games the same score, it's an astonishingly close-run thing, and we couldn't quite justify giving Prime an extra per cent. You wouldn't believe the arguments, discussions, and fist-fights we had about it.
2. Yes.
3. Yes.

1. Does the GBA SP have anything over the regular GBA other than the backlight and the rechargeable battery? Anything?
2. I heard that the GC modem is coming out a day after *Phantasy Star Online* comes out in Europe. Is that true?
3. When's *Phantasy Star Online* coming out?
Martin Brandt, Lewisham

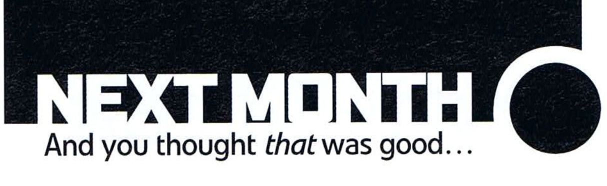
1. Well, it's smaller, and the flip-up screen means it won't get scratched. And, er, you can turn the light off if you want. That's about it. Nice, though, isn't it?
2. The modems should be released at the same time as the game, yes. However, we've no confirmation yet of any game/modem bundles.
3. 7th March, apparently. It's the date Nintendo have offered, although Sega publishers Infogrames couldn't confirm or deny this at the time of writing. (Stop press – see page 26!)

1. Have you any more information on *Soul Calibur 2*?
2. Will the Gamecube be able to run through a broadband internet connection?
Jamie Gray, via email

1. Yes. Plenty, in fact. it's defintiely, definitely coming out, despite Namco recently stating that the PS2 will be their main focus. And it's got Link in it! Check out the preview on page 12 for more info. Namco are also making the new Starfox game as well, so their ties to Nintendo and our beloved purple Cube must be quite strong.
2. Yep, when the broadband adaptor is released – currently on or around March 7th, according to Infogrames and Nintendo.

1. Is *Picassio* still coming?
2. What about *Thornado*?
3. *Tekken*?
4. *Too Human*?
5. *GTA*?
Tom Stevenson, Chester

1. Nothing's been heard about it for ages, so it's doubtful, but we're willing to be surprised.
2. Hopefully it's Factor 5's next project, unless they've been hornswaggled into making another Rogue Squadron.
3. Nope.
4. Could well be Silicon Knights' follow–up to Eternal Darkness, unless they want to create something all-new. Or an Eternal Darkness sequel.
5. Hahahahaha!





HITMAN 2

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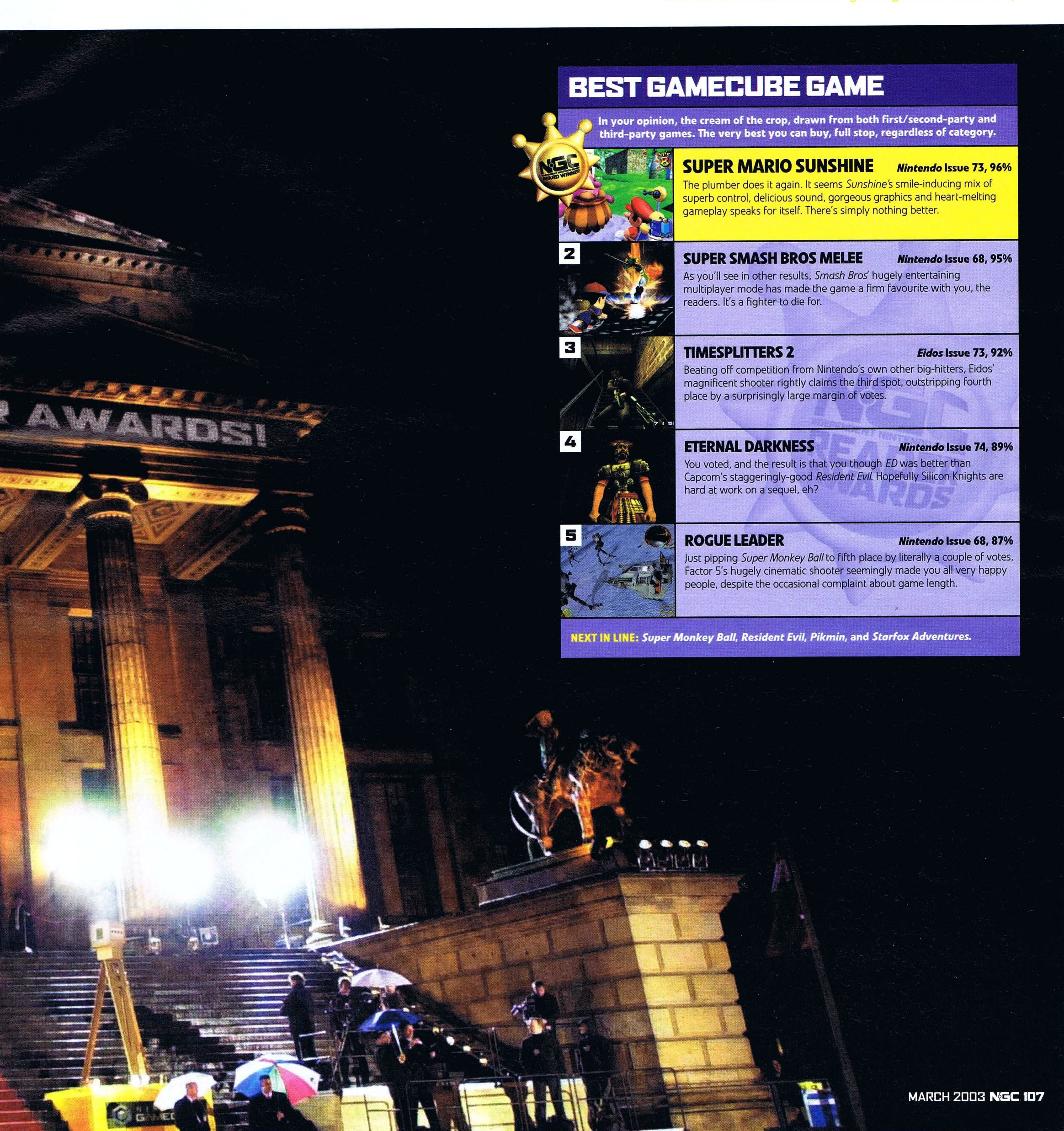
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You voted, we counted, and here are the results – laydees and gennlemen, it's the **NGC** 2002 Awards! (Cue applause.)

In issue 76 we asked you to vote for your favourite games that were released in 2002, for the NGC 2002 Awards. Having eventually found ourselves buried beneath an envelope-based mountain, we cleared our throats, rolled up our sleeves, and got to work collating the results. It took us five days, several hernias and the terrifying prospect of a sleep-deprived Martin before we had the results – but it's been worth it.

Behold, then, the **NGC** 2002 Awards – as voted for by you, our readers. And this is what you thought...



BEST GAMECUBE GAME

In your opinion, the cream of the crop, drawn from both first/second-party and third-party games. The very best you can buy, full stop, regardless of category.

SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE — *Nintendo* Issue 73, 96%

The plumber does it again. It seems *Sunshine's* smile-inducing mix of superb control, delicious sound, gorgeous graphics and heart-melting gameplay speaks for itself. There's simply nothing better.

2 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE — *Nintendo* Issue 68, 95%

As you'll see in other results, *Smash Bros'* hugely entertaining multiplayer mode has made the game a firm favourite with you, the readers. It's a fighter to die for.

3 TIMESPLITTERS 2 — *Eidos* Issue 73, 92%

Beating off competition from Nintendo's own other big-hitters, Eidos' magnificent shooter rightly claims the third spot, outstripping fourth place by a surprisingly large margin of votes.

4 ETERNAL DARKNESS — *Nintendo* Issue 74, 89%

You voted, and the result is that you though *ED* was better than Capcom's staggeringly-good *Resident Evil*. Hopefully Silicon Knights are hard at work on a sequel, eh?

5 ROGUE LEADER — *Nintendo* Issue 68, 87%

Just pipping *Super Monkey Ball* to fifth place by literally a couple of votes, Factor 5's hugely cinematic shooter seemingly made you all very happy people, despite the occasional complaint about game length.

NEXT IN LINE: ***Super Monkey Ball*, *Resident Evil*, *Pikmin*, and *Starfox Adventures*.**

BEST THIRD-PARTY GAME

A console cannot live on first-party exclusives alone, and unlike the N64, the Gamecube is awash with games from other development houses.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
Eidos **Issue 73, 92%**

A well-deserved first place for the spiritual successor to *GoldenEye* and *Perfect Dark*. A giant gun-based toybox, this offers a wealth of things to see and do – inexhaustible challenges, a meaty single-player, a comprehensive multiplayer and a mapmaker. Moves like a whippet, too.

2 RESIDENT EVIL
Capcom **Issue 72, 89%**

Still terrifying and now graphically gobsmacking, even if some elements – the doors, the controls, some puzzles – are archaic and irritating. But a wonderfully tense adventure nonetheless.

3 SUPER MONKEY BALL
Infogrames/Sega **Issue 67, 88%**

Weird and very wonderful indeed, this next-gen iteration of *Marble Madness* is properly taxing but utterly reliant on your own skills. Superb minigames round off a great package.

4 STAR WARS: ROGUE LEADER
Activision **Issue 68, 87%**

The game that launched Gamecube with a bang. A little lightweight, perhaps, but this still offers movie-quality visuals and sound, and completely thrilling classic Star Wars action. A rush.

5 TONY HAWK'S PRO SKATER 4
Activision **Issue 75, 85%**

Also including votes for the third game, it seems your thirst for combos, mangled skaters and nu-metal soundtracks remains undimmed. About as good as the whole stunt/sport genre gets.

NEXT IN LINE: ***SS2, Lost Kingdoms, Burnout.*** **And just a solitary vote for** ***Turok Evolution.*** **Gawd bless it, eh? Poor thing...**



BEST NINTENDO GAME

Who's the world's greatest games developer? Nintendo, of course, and it's their first and second-party games that lead the way, breaking brave new ground for videogames and paving the way for everyone else to follow. But what's the best they've offered yet on the Gamecube?



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
Issue 73, 96%

Granted, it's more of a refinement of the template created by *Super Mario 64*, but this is a lesson in control and simple, joyous wonder. Tough though.

2 SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
Issue 68, 95%

Beautiful, balanced, a blur of chopsockery – and you liked it so much that *Mario Sunshine* received only four more votes than this.



3 LUIGI'S MANSION
Issue 76, 90%

Small but perfectly formed, and both hauntingly and humorously atmospheric. Proof that Nintendo's 'shorter games' policy is coming up trumps. And an improved PAL release.



4 PIKMIN
Issue 69, 85%

Another short game, but one that's astonishingly addictive and absorbing. Only Nintendo could make what is essentially a real-time strategy game so much fun – and so endearing.

5 ETERNAL DARKNESS
Issue 74, 89%

Nearly pipping *Pikmin* to fourth place, this *Resident Evil* alternative may have borne the scars of its N64 origins, but it offered a superb storyline and mind-chunting Lovecraftian thrills

NEXT IN LINE: ***Wave Race: Blue Storm, Mario Party 4, Doshin the Giant.***

BEST GBA GAME

It might be tiny and wee, but the very best the GBA has to offer can easily stand up to Gamecube's best – Advance Wars, for example, has taken up a huge amount of our time this year. But what did you like?



METROID FUSION
***Nintendo* Issue 76, 92%**

Metroid mania has gripped you lot as well, it seems, for *Prime*'s little bro is your favourite GBA game of 2002. A masterpiece of exploration, isolation and blasting thrills – truly exemplary.

2



ADVANCE WARS
***Nintendo* Issue 61, 5 stars**

Heresy! Our self-proclaimed Best GBA Game ever 'only' makes the number two spot! (surely a sign of *Metroid*'s quality) But *Advance Wars* is a gigantic game of tactical brilliance.

3



GOLDEN SUN
***Nintendo* Issue 64, 4 stars**

Who needs *Final Fantasy*? RPGs don't come much better than this. It also features eye-gouging pseudo-3D battle scenes. The GBA might be small, but it's got a big heart.

4



MARIO ADVANCE 3: YOSHI'S ISLAND
***Nintendo* Issue 74, 92%**

Still as charming as ever, and arguably superior to *Mario Advance 2*. Some might question Nintendo's game-recycling scheme, but we don't care.

5



MARIO KART SUPER CIRCUIT
***Nintendo* Issue 59, 5 stars**

This racer might have led to mighty hand-cramp, but over 40 tracks – including those SNES classics – make it something that we all risk RSI for.

NEXT IN LINE: ***Super Mario Advance 2: Super Mario World, Tony Hawk's Pro Skater, Sonic Advance.***

WORST GAME

Stinkers. Steaming great piles of munt. Some games aren't worth the plastic and mathematical number-code they're fabricated from. Here, then, is your top tat



UNIVERSAL STUDIOS
***Kemco* Issue 67, 24%**

In with a bullet at number one, it's the only game in the world that makes you pick up rubbish for 'fun'. A hearty congratulations to poor old Kemco, then. We're curious, though – did any of you actually buy it?

2



MICKEY'S MAGICAL MIRROR
***Disney* Issue 73, 26%**

Developed by Capcom, who obviously had a bad reaction creating *Resident Evil* games and went too far the other way. A nauseatingly awful game and eminently worthy of the number two spot.

3



FIFA 2002
***EA* Issue 69, 30%**

Given the relative brilliance of the 2003 iteration, it's amusing to revisit this sorry thing to see just how wrong they got it. Ah, *FIFA* – you used to be so reliable.

4



THE SCORPION KING
***Vivendi Universal* Issue 75, 30%**

Entertaining insofar as you can punch camels and they emit a strange honking noise, yet don't fall over. Criminally tragic. Interestingly, this received twice the number of votes as *Gauntlet Dark Legacy*.

5



SCOOBY DOO: NIGHT OF 100 FRIGHTS!
***THQ* Issue 75, 36%**

As one of you so succinctly put it, "why oh why do THQ continue to foist this asinine, cretinous waste-product on us? I've had more fun being sick." Harsh perhaps, but nonetheless fair.

NEXT IN LINE: ***Crash Bandicoot, Spyro, Tetris Worlds.***

MOST WANTED

2003 promises to be a bigger and better year for Gamecube than 2002. (and that was considerably big) But which games are you looking forward to the most?



ZELDA: THE WIND WAKER
Nintendo

This was so close. A single, solitary vote separated Zelda from Metroid, but Link's latest adventure won out. And it seems that the new style hasn't put any of you off, which is good as the game is an astonishing thing of beauty. Now, if only we didn't have to wait 'till May for it…

2



METROID PRIME
Nintendo

Proof positive, perhaps, that more 'mature' games are indeed in demand on Ninty's console, or perhaps you've just recognised that *Metroid Prime* is a superlative gaming experience, regardless of the guns and aliens. Not too much longer to wait, now…

3



ANIMAL CROSSING
Nintendo

Hurrah! In at number three, hopefully Nintendo of Europe might now realise that PAL gamers actually do want to spend money and buy one of the most innovative and entertaining games Nintendo have ever made. We demand a release – now!

4



MARIO KART
Nintendo

Nothing has been seen of this yet, but the promise of this most enduring and exciting of Nintendo's franchises is enough to warrant a number four placing. The intriguing possibility of online play can only make the game even better.

5



FINAL FANTASY: CRYSTAL CHRONICLES
Square

The N64 was a *Final Fantasy*-less place, which was galling for all those who had fallen in love with the series on the SNES. But now our old pals Square are back, and this first fruit of their reunion with Nintendo has enthused all of you.

NEXT IN LINE: ***F-Zero, PSO, Mario Tennis,*** **plus a nomination for "a half-decent racer".**

BUBBLING UNDER

You voted for the games that were underappreciated – overshadowed by *Mario Sunshine* or *Timesplitters 2*. And here, then, are your personal favourites…



STARFOX ADVENTURES
***Nintendo* Issue 74, 72%**

Some might say we scored *SFA* controversially. We say it's a good game, but far from a great one. Hence the well above-average score. But despite its shortcomings, you still loved it, and clutched it to your chests like a sickly child. Bless.

2



MARIO PARTY 4
***Nintendo* Issue 75, 68%**

Great fun with three chums, but nonetheless a step back from the relative greatness of series high-point *Mario Party 2*. However, it seems enough of you have the requisite amount of friends for those all important four-player fun-fests, hence *MP4*'s number two position.

3



PIKMIN
***Nintendo* Issue 69, 85%**

Pikmin, despite being a critical darling and an utterly charming experience, never quite got the attention it deserved, or the sales figures, despite it being the brainchild of good ol' Shigsy. It's good to know that you all appreciate it as much as we do.

4



LUIGI'S MANSION
***Nintendo* Issue 67, 90%**

Like *Pikmin*, *Luigi's Mansion* is a great game that's suffered due to a perceived paucity of length – however, launching with the console gave it a higher profile that it might otherwise have had. A jewel of a game.

5



BURNOUT
***Acclaim* Issue 67, 86%**

Racing games are usually much of a muchness, but this tyre-squealing beauty, inspired by the car-chase in the film Ronin, is a wince-inducing ballet of car-crashes and outlandish speed. A lost treasure indeed.

NEXT IN LINE: *Lost Kingdoms, Agent Under Fire, Sonic Adventure 2 Battle.*

MISCELLANEOUS AWARDS

A grab-bag of awards that showcases individual triumphs, from the best-looking game on Gamecube to the most enjoyably multiplayer. And here are the winners:



Best Visuals
RESIDENT EVIL
***Capcom* Issue 72, 89%**

Almost photorealistic and stunningly graphic. Gorgeous and a well-deserved win.

2nd place: Starfox Adventures, 3rd place: Star Wars Rogue Leader



Best Sound
SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
***Nintendo* Issue 73, 96%**

Sunkissed tunes and head-turning effects – an aural delight.

2nd place: Eternal Darkness, 3rd place: Resident Evil



Best Multiplayer
SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
***Nintendo* Issue 68, 95%**

Almost limitless options and so much to do. Social gaming heaven.

2nd place: Timesplitters 2, 3rd place: Mario Party 4



Best Gameplay
SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
***Nintendo* Issue 73, 96%**

Another deserved win for Mario, and a game stuffed with substance and things to do.

2nd place: Timesplitters 2, 3rd place: Super Smash Bros Melee



Most Played Game
SUPER SMASH BROS MELEE
***Nintendo* Issue 68, 95%**

An endless treasury of fisticuff fun, this one is almost endlessly entertaining.

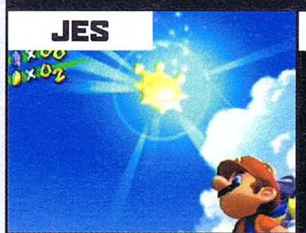
2nd place: Super Mario Sunshine, 3rd place: Timesplitters 2

And there you have it. Apart from the single, sad vote for *Zoocube* as Best Multiplayer.

STAFF PICKS

What the NGC team liked more than anything else this year. Although Dan didn't quite grasp the fact that only PAL games released in 2002 were eligible, hence his vote for *Animal Crossing*. He's stupid, but we love him – a little like Leonardo DiCaprio in What's Eating Gilbert Grape?

JES



SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
Exploring each world for blue coins has taken up my gaming time more than anything.

TIMESPLITTERS 2
A wonderful ameliorative to the sad news that there'll be no GC *Perfect Dark*.

PIKMIN
Utterly captivating until it ends, and perfectly judged in every area. Lovely.

MARTIN



RESIDENT EVIL
This was all new to me since I never played the original. I'm a sucker for flashy graphics.

LUIGI'S MANSION
Purely because, unlike *Mario Sunshine*, I actually managed to finish it. Twice.

PIKMIN
One of the few genuinely original things on Gamecube. I had loads of fun compiling tips for it.

DAN

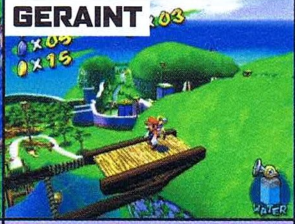


ANIMAL CROSSING
Addictive and dark, with a mischievous sense of humour. Community-based magic!

SUPER MONKEY BALL
I'm rubbish at this, but my girlfriend likes it. I think it's the noises they make before they fall off the edge…

SSX TRICKY
I've never been snowboarding, for real, but I hope it has speed strips and über-tricks…

GERAINT

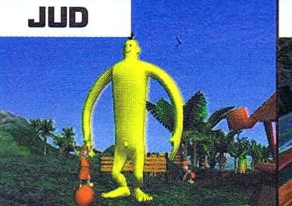


SUPER MARIO SUNSHINE
Locked in my room for three days with no toilet breaks.

SMASH BROS MELEE
It's my most played game last year and is responsible for more all-nighters with my mates than I care to mention.

CAPCOM VS SNK 2
With an arcade stick, I was as addicted as I always have been. Old habits die hard…

JUD



DOSHIN THE GIANT
That's right mortals! You will bow before me, revere me, praise me, for I have a gun!

TIMESPLITTERS 2
The Tactical 12-gague recoil action could look more real, but the used cartridge exhaust angle is spot on, blah, blah…

TOP GUN
This sounds more promising. I'm sure it's a film or something – is it about guns?

PAUL



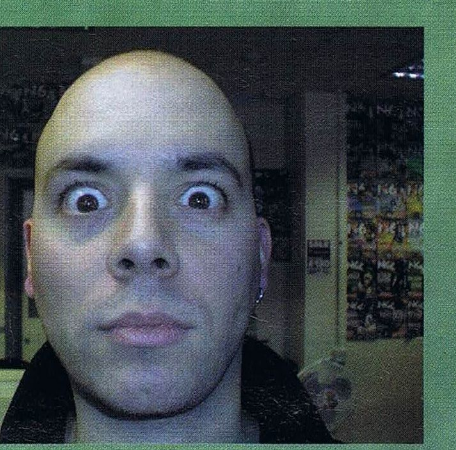
BURNOUT
Brilliant mixture of toupee-flipping speeds and huge pile ups. Also, I can beat Joao from Edge on it… easily.

ROCKY
I could 'off' that BA Baracus any time, and that Dolph guy's a pussy – beatings, anyone?

KELLY SLATER'S
At last, the option of hanging, er, 'one', without having to smell like a sewage outlet pipe.

TALK TIME

Want to know what it's like working in the games industry? This month, our very own Jes Bickham shows us a day in the life of a games mag…



WHO IS... JES BICKHAM

Jes is none other than the editor of this here august journal and mighty organ, **NGC** Magazine. He's been working on games magazines for the last five years, including a lengthy stint on **NGC**'s predecessor, N64 Magazine. Jes is 29 years old and enjoys playing the jazz loom.

9.00AM
Arrive for work 30 minutes early due to the vagaries of Bath's bus system. The only other people in the building at this time are the other mag editors, who are either terribly diligent or horribly overworked. Mumble 'good morning' at Tim Weaver, whose magazine – Max – we have to walk past to get to the **NGC** *office. Sit down and check my emails and the 'net for news.*

9.30AM
The rest of the team arrive in drips and drabs, and invariably Dan, Jud or Martin is late, the cumulative effect of which causes me to periodically shriek hysterically about deadlines. By 9.45 Jud cracks and goes and makes the tea, when it's obvious that no-one else will.

10.00AM
Gather everyone around to have a meeting to see how the mag is progressing. We get, on average, 18 or so working days to an issue, and it's paramount that everything is as organised as possible. We go through the flatplan – basically the contents of the mag – and check that anything that can be commissioned to be written has been, and that in-house editorial is being produced as quickly as possible, and that the art staff have enough to be getting on with. Maintaining a smooth workflow is important, as one of the things we try to avoid is having content backed-up at the end of an issue, meaning, more often than not, late nights as deadline encroaches.

10.30AM
Field calls from PR people checking whether we've got space to preview/review their game. Also do some calling of our own to chase up the games that have been promised for preview/review. Martin, as reviews editor, gets on the case and utilises his 'phone voice', a highly effective combination of unctious, oily persuasion and blunt, blood-chilling threat.

11.00AM
Myself and Jud meet with our publisher and the commercial department to talk about our covermount - this month it's a DVD. Much discussion is had over whether we're going to bag the issue or simply stick the DVD to the front, meaning people can 'sample' the mag on the newsstand. After this, I check with Phil, our ads guy, about the ads situation in this issue. The good news is that Nintendo have taken an ad for Metroid Prime. *The bad news is that since we're still in the post-Christmas lull, nobody else is advertising much. Pah.*

11.30AM
Finally get stuck in to doing some writing for the mag. I take it on myself to write the 2002 Awards feature, which in itself is quite interesting, but nonetheless means I have to open hundreds of envelopes and collate literally thousands of results. Erk. Geraint, meanwhile, is reviewing Phantasy Star Online, *and is playing over the electrical interweb with a Japanese user. The fractured conversation between them is both fascinating and hilarious, and Geraint nobly ignores the catcalls for rude comments by the rest of the team.*

1.00PM
Usually we'll play a bit of Smash Bros *or* Timesplitters *at lunchtime, or even go a bit retro and dust off* Mario Kart *or* F-Zero. *However, today some PR people have arrived to show off their wares, and take us out for some lovely food. Luckily, we resisted the spurious bread-things that are proffered by various visiting sandwichmen during the morning, and are heartened by the mouth-watering promise of actual, nourishing victuals.*

2.00PM
We waddle back to the office, replete and somewhat sleepy, although, of course, we're professional enough to attend the demo of the game the PR folk have come down to show us, and also talk about how much coverage we can offer. Afterwards, I slump back into my chair, rattle off some important emails and get back to the keyboard.

3.00PM
In between laying out pages and generally making the editorial staff's juvenile scrawls look presentable, Jud's been working on the cover. I take a look and talk over any design decisions that we have to make, along with coverlines. Without a bag this issue - which we'd otherwise use to advertise content - we've got to squeeze a lot of info on the cover without cramping the style of the mag. Happily, it's all coming together rather well.

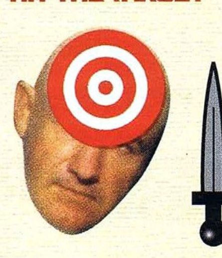
3.30PM
The two-part Resident Evil Zero *walkthrough we've started in this issue was provided by a slightly more than diligent freelancer. Unfortunately, the original document is somewhere in the region of 15,000 words, and is exhaustive beyond belief. This needs cutting back to approximately half that size if we're to fit it in - a sizeable job for Dan. We sit down, go through the whole thing and decide where to make the cuts.*

4.00PM
The rear-end of the day brings many small, but nevertheless pressing jobs - contributor payments need authorising, certain flatplan changes need to be made, and Paul's awful music needs silencing.

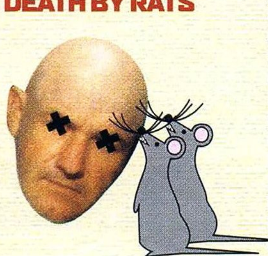
6.00PM
Home time! As it's Friday we indulge ourselves and the team dutifully pops to the local hostelry and blows the froth off a couple of flagons of shandy. The majority of Future Publishing will also be imbibing, and later on, stumbling. The weekend awaits.

LEX LUTHOR'S SOLVE MY MURDER

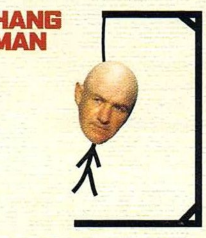
HIT THE TARGET



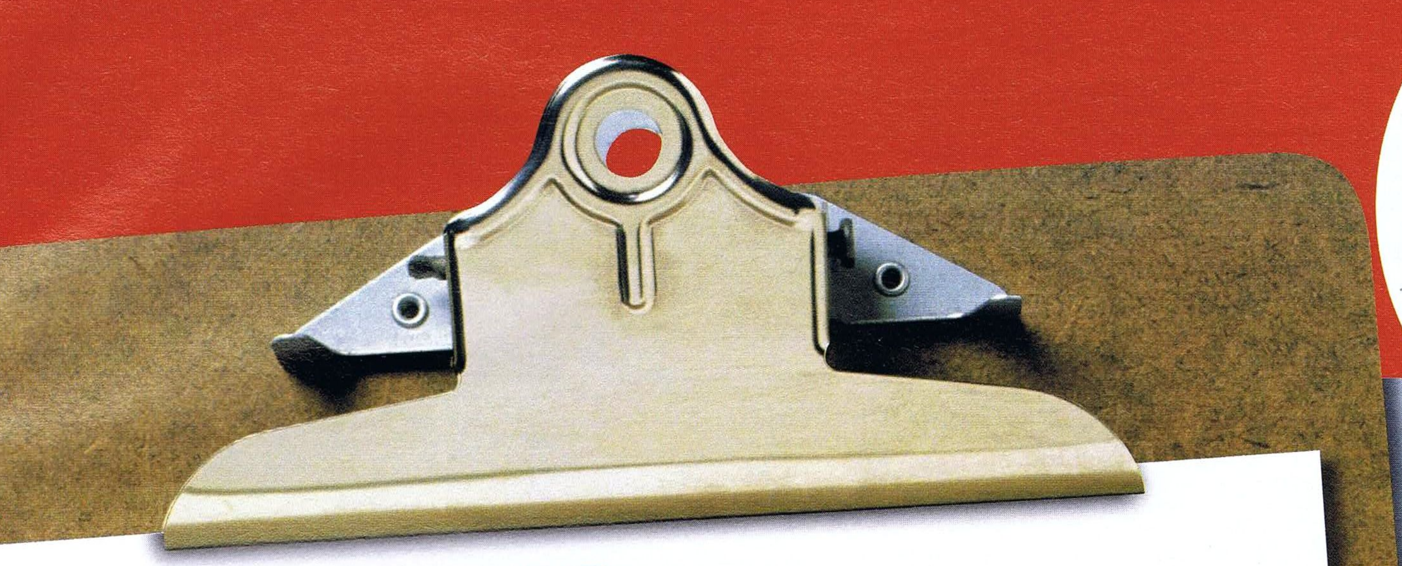
DEATH BY RATS



HANG MAN



WIN WIND CLAWS
Send your solutions to:
Solve my Maze, **NGC**, 30 Monmouth Street, Bath BA12BW
OR EMAIL: ngc@futurenet.co.uk
Last month's winner: Sol Redfearn, Beverley



THE EVOLUTION OF... 2D SHOOTERS

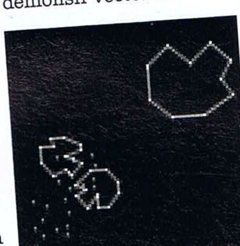
The last refuge for the twitchy-thumbed retro fan-boy, squinting nervously over well-worn eight-way control devices, drooling...

1 SPACE INVADERS

The game that started it all off. Moving your 'tank' across the bottom of the screen you had to eliminate a steadily encroaching wave of enemies. The game was hugely popular (whole arcades in Japan were opened because of it) and reputedly caused a rise in juvenile crime as children stole to feed their gaming habit...

2 ASTEROIDS

Rather than simply moving from left to right, Asteroids gave you free movement around the playing area as you attempted to demolish vectored asteroids into smaller and smaller pieces. Perhaps its greatest attribute was your craft's inertia, which lent the game a certain grace, hitherto unseen in the arcades.

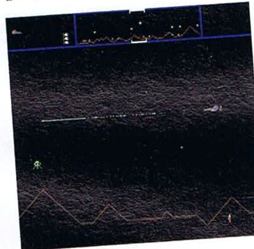


3 GALAXIAN

This was the first game to be truly reminiscent of its descendants. It's noteworthy due to the fact that it was the first game featuring true RGB colour (old games overlaid colour film over portions of the screen). It also boasted the first 'proper' attack waves, with enemies charging in groups from a convoy above.

4 DEFENDER

Single-handedly pioneering side-scrolling, Defender was deemed barely playable by the Amusement and Music Operators Association. At test locations, players failed miserably to get to grips with its joystick and five-button layout. However, it has since gone on to join Pac-Man as one of the highest-grossing arcade games in existence.



5 XEVIOUS

Stunning for its day, it's arguably the first top-down, vertically scrolling shooter – after its release, loads of shooters (1942, for example) blatantly copied it. There weren't any 'levels' as such – you just kept scrolling forwards, bombing and shooting stuff. Instead, the path was divided up by checkpoints, and if you died, you simply started again at the nearest one.



6 NEMESIS/GRADIUS

Power-ups were the name of the game come 1985, and none were so refined as in the classic Nemesis (Gradius in US and Japan). Though you could choose how you powered-up, the game became harder the more you did so. Thus adding a tactical element missing from other games up to this point.



7 R-TYPE

Irem's 1987 blaster became the benchmark. It featured chunky sprites, a weapon that could be charged at will, and innovative power-ups. Visually, it took shoot-'em-ups to the next level, while the bosses blew everything that went before it completely out of the water.



8 AXELAY

Only a select few (such as Thunderforce IV) games of this genre were particularly praiseworthy during the 16-bit era, but Axelay was the finest of them all. Borrowing from the brilliant Salamander – which had alternating side scrolling and vertical levels – this short-lived blaster boasted impeccably tight level design, amazing Mode 7 effects and quite breathtaking boss animation.



9 RADIANT SILVERGUN

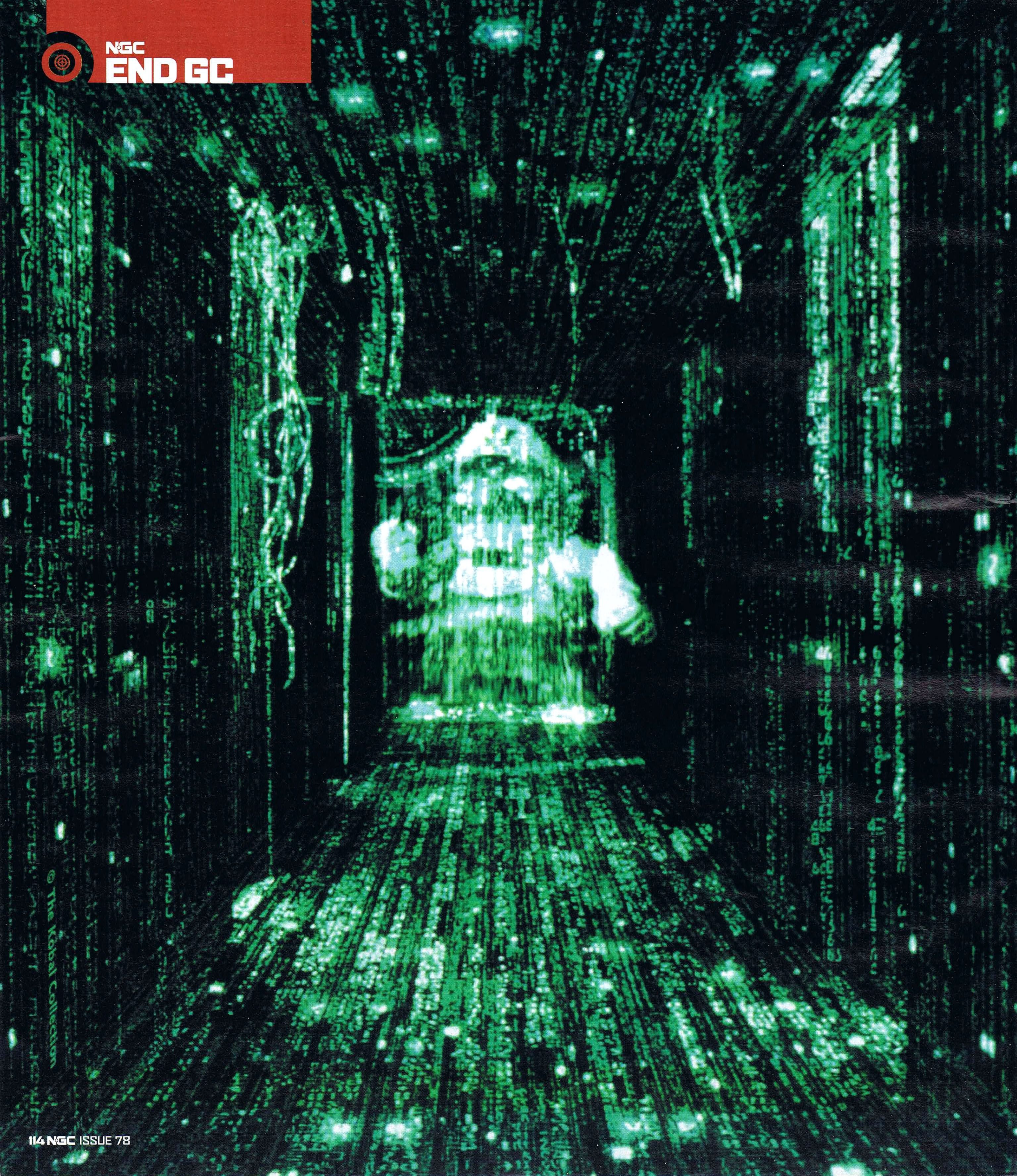
The finest shooter in existence, with innovations aplenty. You started with all your weapons which were selectable at any point, and you could access even more weapons which could be powered up by chain-killing enemies of the same colour. The sheer challenge and imagination in this game makes it unmatched to this day.



NGC TOP10

TIRED OLD RUBBISH YOU'LL FIND IN ALMOST EVERY SHOOT-'EM-UP

1. **PEA SHOOTER** The basic weapon. Completely useless, and even if you upgrade it, it returns to haunt you after you die. Yay!
2. **ENGRISH** An endless source of content for 'hilarious' websites. All your base are belong to us! How's your Japanese, then?
3. **INVISIBULLETS** Wha... what hit me?! Ahh, of course – it must have been a tiny bullet that's exactly the same colour as the backdrop.
4. **MY LEETLE FRIEND** A weapon so ludicrously big, it covers almost the entire width of the screen. Come along now, let's have a little decorum.
5. **ROBO-MUSIC** An ear-offending blend of synth pop and thrash metal, as often heard on German radio stations. Make it stop! Aaiiieee!
6. **QUANTUM LEAP** Finite laser beams. How does that work then? Answers on a postcard to somebody who gives a damn, please.
7. **AWOOOGA!!!** The deafening klaxon sound as you approach the end of the level, heralding the imminent approach of...
8. **THE HEAD** A gigantic disembodied head. Sometimes with hands. Sometimes without. Always with lasers coming out of its eyeballs.
9. **MACHINE-O-WALL** Alternatively, a giant cyborg beast that's welded onto a wall. How are you going to conquer the universe like that?
10. **ROTATE-A-THING** It's big, it's kind of abstract-looking, and it aims to kill you by making you fly in a tiny moving gap. Right next to its weak point.



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Links Awakening (Zelda)
Pokemon Blue
Pokemon Crystal
Pokemon Gold
Pokemon Red
Pokemon Silver
Pokemon Trading Card
Pokemon Yellow
Rayman
Simpsons: Thouse Horror
Super Mario Bros DX
Super Mario Land
Super Mario Land 2
Yellow Pokemon
Yu-Gi-Oh! Duel Monsters
Zelda: Links Awake. DX
Zelda: Oracle of Ages
Zelda: Oracle of Seasons
Plus Many More...

N64
A Bug's Life
Aidyn Chronicles
Backstage Assault
Banjo Kazooie
Banjo Tooie
Blues Brothers 2000
Diddy Kong Racing
Donkey Kong 64
Glover
Goldeneye
Legend of Zelda: M.Mask
Majora's Mask
Mario 64
Mario Karts
Mission Impossible
Perfect Dark
Super Mario
Super Smash Brothers
The World is not Enough
Tony Hawk's 2
Turok 2
Turok: Dinosaur Hunter
WCW vs NWO Revenge
WWF Wrestlemania '00
Zelda
Zelda: Majora's Mask
Plus Many More...

DREAMCAST
Dynamite Cop
Fighting Force 2
GTA 2
Metropolis Street Racer
Ready 2 Rumble 2
Res. Evil: Code Veronica
Resident Evil 2
Tomb Raider 5
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Advance Wars
Aggressive Inline
Army Men Advance
Atlantis: The Lost Empire
Breath of Fire
Broken Sword
Castlevania: C of Moon
Crash Bandicoot XS
Dragonball Z: Leg. Goku
Driver 2 Advance
Ecks Vs. Sever 2: Ballistic
Fellowship Of The Ring
Final Fight One
Game & Watch Gallery 4
Golden Sun
GT Advance Champ.
Harry Potter
Harry Potter Ch Secrets
L. of Zelda: Link to Past
Lord of Rings Two Towers
Mario Kart Super Circuit
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX
Medabots AX
Medal of Honor Underg.
Mega Man Battle Net. 2
Megaman Zero
Metroid Fusion
Midnight Club
Monster Force
Monster Rancher 2
Monsters Inc
Mort.Kombat: Deadly All.
Motocross Maniacs Adv.
Nancy Drew: H. Mansion
Peter Pan: Ret.Neverland
Pokemon Blue
Pokemon Crystal
Pokemon Gold
Pokemon Red
Pokemon Silver
Pokemon Yellow
Rayman Advance
Ready 2 Rumble 2
Reign Of Fire
Robot Wars: Extreme Dst.
Robotech: Macross Saga
Rocket Power: D. Scheme
Rocky
Smugglers Run
Sonic Advance
Sonic Advance 2
Spiderman The Movie
Spyro: Season of Flame
Spyro: Season of Ice
Star Wars: N Droid Army
Street Fighter 2 Revival
Street Fighter Alpha 3
Stuart Little 2
Super Mario Advance 2
Super Mario Advance 3
Tekken Advance
The L. of Zelda: L. to Past
The Two Towers
Tomb Raider: Prophecy
Tony Hawk's 2
Tony Hawk's 3
Tony Hawk's 4
Top Gun: Firestorm Adv.
Wario Land 4
Yoshi's Island
Yu-Gi-Oh! Eternal Duelist
Zelda: A Link to the Past
Plus Many More...

PC
Age of Emp: Rise of Rome
Age of Empires
Age of Empires 2
Age of Mythology
Airfix Dogfighter
Battlefield 1942
Black & White
Bond 007: Nightfire
Broken Sword 1
Broken Sword 2
C&C: Red Alert
C&C: Red Alert 2
Champ. Manager 2002
Champ. Manager 3
Commandos 2
Commandos B E Lines
Cossaks: European Wars
Dark Colony
Disciples 2 Dark Prophecy
Divine Divinity
Dracula Last Sanctuary
Dungeon Siege
Emperor Middle Kingdom
Empire Earth
FA P.Lgue F'ball Man.'02
FIFA 2003
Grand Theft Auto 2
Grand Theft Auto 3
Half Life
Harry Potter
Harry Potter C.of Secrets
Heroes of M&M III
Hitman
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Icewind Dale 2
James Bond: Nightfire
Jedi Knight 2
Lord of Rings: Fel. of Ring
Mafia
Master of Olympus
Max Payne
Medal of Honor: All. Ass.
Medal of Hon: Sp'head
Medieval: Total War
Nightfire
No One Lives Forever
Omikron: Nomad Soul
Railroad Tycoon 2
Roller Coaster Tycoon
RollerCoaster Tycoon II
Shogun: Total War
Sim City 2000
Sim City 3000
SimCity 4
Sims
Sims Livin' It Up
Sims: Deluxe
Sims: Unleashed
Soldier of Fortune
Soldier of Fortune 2
Soul Reaver
Spearhead
Star Trek: Elite Force
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
Stronghold
Sudden Strike 2
Thief: Dark Project
Tomb Raider 2
Total Club Manager 03
Warcraft 3: R. of Chaos
World War 3: Black Gold
Zoo Tycoon
Plus Many More...

X-BOX
Agent Under Fire
All Star Baseball 2003
Azurik: Rise of Perthia
Blade 2
Blinx: The Time Sweeper
Blood Omen 2
BMX XXX
Bond 007: Nightfire
Buffy The Vampire Slayer
Burnout
Champ. Manager 2002
Colin McRae Rally 3
Commandos 2
Conflict: Desert Storm
Dead or Alive 3
Defender
Desert Storm (Conflict)
Dr. Muto
Dynasty Warriors 3
Enclave
FIFA 2003
Freestyle Snowboarding
Frontline (M. of Honor)
Genma Onimusha
Ghost Recon
GT 2002
Gun Metal
Halo
Harry Potter C.of Secrets
Hitman 2: Silent Ass.
Hunter: The Reckoning
James Bond: Nightfire
Jedi Knight 2
Jet Set Radio Future
Legends of Wrestling 2
LMA Manager 2003
Lord of Rings Two Towers
Lord of Rings: Fel. of Ring
Marvel vs Capcom 2
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
Max Payne
Medal of Honor Frontline
Mort.Kombat: Deadly All.
Moto GP
Need for Speed H.Purs.2
Nightfire
Oddworld: M's Oddysee
Onimusha Genma
Phantom Crash
Project Gotham Racing
Rocky
Sega GT 2002
Sega Soccer Slam
Silent Hill 2: Inner Fears
Spiderman The Movie
Splinter Cell
Star Wars: Jedi Knight 2
Terminator: Dawn of Fate
Test Drive: Overdrive
The Fellowship Of Ring
The Thing
The Two Towers
Tiger Woods Golf 2003
Time Splitters 2
Tom Clancy's Splinter Cell
Tony Hawk's 3
Tony Hawk's 4
Transworld Surf
Turok: Evolution
Wreckless: Yakuza Miss.
WWF Raw
X-Men: Next Dimension
Plus Many More...

PS2
Ace Combat 4: S. Skies
Age of Empires 2
Agent Under Fire
Alone in the Dark 4
Atlantis 3: New World
Blade 2
BMX XXX
Burnout
Burnout 2 Point of Impact
C.Bandicoot: W.of Cortex
Colin McRae Rally 3
Commandos 2
Conflict Zone
Conflict: Desert Storm
Dark Cloud
Devil May Cry
Dragonball Z: Budokai
Draken: Ancient Gates
Escape Monkey Island
FIFA 2003
Final Fantasy 10
Getaway
Gran Turismo 3
Grand T Auto: Vice City
Grand Theft Auto 3
Half Life
Harry Potter C.of Secrets
Headhunter
Hitman 2: Silent Assassin
Jak & Daxter
James Bond: Nightfire
Kingdom Hearts
LMA Manager 2003
Lord of Rings Two Towers
Lord of Rings: Fel. of Ring
Max Payne
Medal of Honor Frontline
Metal Gear Solid 2
Minority Report
Nightfire
Onimusha 2
007 Nightfire
Operation Winback
Pro Evolution Soccer 2
Project Zero
Ratchet and Clank
Red Faction
Red Faction 2
Res.Evil: C. Veronica X
Rocky
Silent Hill 2
Simpsons' Skateboarding
Smackdown! 4: Shut Y.M.
Soldier of Fortune
Spiderman The Movie
Spyro: Ent.the Dragonfly
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter
Stuntman
Summoner 2
Terminator: Dawn of Fate
The Getaway
The Thing
The Two Towers
Time Splitters 2
Tony Hawk's 3
Tony Hawk's 4
Turok: Evolution
Vice City, G.T.A.
World Rally Champ.2 Ext.
WWE Smackdown! S.Y.M.
007 Agent Under Fire
007 Nightfire
Plus Many More...

GAME CUBE
A = 01
Agent Under Fire
Aggressive Inline
Animal Crossing
B = 02
Batman Vengeance
Beach Spikers
BloodRayne
Bloody Roar: Primal Fury
BMX XXX
Bomberman Generation
Bond 007: Nightfire
Bond: Agent Under Fire
Bounty Hunter: Star Wars
Burnout
C = 03
Capcom vs. SNK: EO
Cel Damage
Chamber of Secrets
Clone Wars - Star Wars
Crash Bandicoot
Crazy Taxi
D = 04
Dave Mirra BMX 2
Dead to Rights
Die Hard: Vendetta
Dinosaur Planet (Starfox)
Disney's Magical Mirror
Doshin the Giant
Dr. Muto
E = 05
Eggo Mania
Eighteen Wheeler
Enter the Dragonfly
ESPN Int.Winter Sports'02
Eternal Darkness
Extreme G 3
F = 06
F1 2002
FIFA '02, '03 & World Cup
Fire Blade
Freekstyle
Frontline (M. of Honor)
G = 07
Gauntlet: Dark Legacy
Godzilla: D. all Monsters
Groove Adventure Rave
H = 08
Harry Potter C.of Secrets
I = 09
Int. Superstar Soccer 2
Int. Winter Sports 2002
J = 10
J McGrath's S'cross World
J.Bond: Agent Under Fire
James Bond: Nightfire
Jedi Knight 2
K = 11
Kelly Slater's Pro Surfer
L = 12
Legends of Wrestling 1&2
Lord of Rings Two Towers
Lost Kingdoms
Luigi's Mansion
M = 13
Madden NFL 2002
Magical Mirror
Mario Party 4
Mario Sunshine
Mat Hoffman's Pro BMX 2
Medal of Honor Frontline
Men In Black 2 Alien Esc.
Metroid Prime
Minority Report
Mort.Kombat: Deadly All.
MX Superfly
Mystic Heroes
N = 14
NASCAR Thunder 2003
NBA 2K2 & 2k3
NBA Courtside 2002
NBA Live 2003
NBA Street
Need for Speed H.Purs.2
NFL Blitz 2002
NFL Q'back Club 2002
NHL 2003
NHL Hitz 2002
Nightfire
O = 15
OO7 Agent Under Fire
OO7 Nightfire
P = 16
Pac-Man World 2
Phantasy Star Online
Pikmin
R = 18
Red Card Soccer 2003
Reign Of Fire
Resident Evil 1 & Zero
Robotech: Battlecry
Rocket Power Bch.Bandits
Rocky
Rogue Leader
Rune - Lost Kingdoms
S = 19
Sanity's Requiem
Scooby Doo: 100 Frights
Sega Soccer Slam
Simpsons: Road Rage
Smugglers Run 2: Warz.
Sonic Adventure 2 Battle
Spiderman The Movie
Spy Hunter
Spyro: Ent.the Dragonfly
SSX Tricky
Star Wars: Bounty Hunter
Star Wars: Clone Wars
Star Wars: J. Knight 2
Star Wars: Rogue Leader
Starfox Adventures
Super Mario Sunshine
Super Monkey Ball 1 & 2
Super Smash Br Melee
T = 20
Tarzan Freeride
Tarzan Untamed
The Simpsons: Road Rage
The Two Towers
Tiger Woods Golf 2003
Time Splitters 2
Tony Hawk's 3 & 4
Top Gun: Combat Zones
Turok: Evolution
Ty the Tasmanian Tiger
U = 21
Ult.F.Champ: Throwdown
V = 22
Vendetta: Die Hard
Virtua Striker 3: V. 2002
W = 23
Wave Race: Blue Storm
World Cup 2002
WWE Wrestlemania X8
X = 24
X-Men: Next Dimension
Z = 26
Zoocube
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007 Agent Under Fire
007 Nightfire
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